This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

BERKELEY
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

W. Hulton Esq.
Hulton Park.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

VOL. II.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION;

OR, A

VIEW OF ITS PAST AND PRESENT EFFECTS

ON

HUMAN HAPPINESS;

WITH

AN INQUIRY INTO OUR PROSPECTS RESPECTING THE FUTURE REMOVAL OR MITIGATION OF THE EVILS WHICH IT OCCASIONS.

By T. R. MALTHUS, A. M.
LATE FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,
BY T. BENSLEY, BOLT COURT, FLEET STREET.

1806.

LOAN STACK
HB861
E7
1806
v. 2
Dept acc. no. M365042

HB861
E7
1806
v.2

CONTENTS

OF THE

SECOND VOLUME.

BOOK II.

CHAP. IX. On the Fruitfulneſs of Marriages -
X. Effects of Epidemics on Regiſters of Births, Deaths, and Marriages - 31
XI. General deductions from the preceding view of Society - - 49

BOOK III.

OF THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OR EXPEDIENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN PROPOSED OR HAVE PREVAILED IN SOCIETY, AS THEY AFFECT THE EVILS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

CHAP. I. Of Syſtems of Equality. Wallace. Condorcet - - - 77
II. Of Syſtems of Equality. Godwin. - 98
III. Obſervations on the Reply of Mr. Godwin, 122
IV. Of Emigration - - - 134

027

V. Of Poor Laws - - 149
VI. Subject of Poor Laws continued - 171
VII. Of increasing Wealth as it affects the Condition of the Poor - - 189
VIII. Of the Definitions of Wealth. Agricultural and Commercial Systems - 207
IX. Different Effects of the Agricultural and Commercial Systems - 221
X. Of Bounties on the Exportation of Corn 237
XI. On the prevailing Errors respecting Population and Plenty - - 278

BOOK IV.

OF OUR FUTURE PROSPECTS RESPECTING THE REMOVAL OR MITIGATION OF THE EVILS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

CHAP. I. Of moral Restraint, and our Obligation to practise this Virtue - - 301
II. Of the Effects which would result to Society from the Prevalence of this Virtue 320
III. Of the only effectual Mode of improving the Condition of the Poor - 336
IV. Objections to this Mode considered - 348
V. Of the Consequences of pursuing the opposite Mode - - - 358
VI. Effects of the Knowledge of the Principal Cause of Poverty on Civil Liberty - 372
VII. Plan of the gradual Abolition of the Poor Laws proposed - - 393

VIII. Of the Modes of correcting the prevailing Opinions on Population - 413
IX. Of the Direction of our Charity - 424
X. Different Plans of improving the Condition of the Poor considered - 439
XI. Of the Neceſſity of general Principles on this Subject - - 464
XII. Of our rational Expectations reſpecting the future Improvement of Society 489
Appendix - - - 505

ESSAY, &c.

BOOK II.

CHAP. IX.

On the fruitfulneſs of Marriages.

It would be extremely deſirable to be able to deduce from the rate of increaſe, the actual population, and the regiſters of births, deaths, and marriages, in different countries, the real prolifickneſs of marriages, and the true proportion of the born which lives to marry. Perhaps the problem may not be capable of an accurate ſolution, but we ſhall make ſome approximation towards it, and be able to account for ſome of the difficulties which appear in many regiſters, if we attend to the following conſiderations.

It ſhould be premiſed however, that in the regiſters of moſt countries there is ſome reaſon to believe, that the omiſſions in the births and deaths are greater than in the marriages; and conſequently, that the proportion of marriages is almoſt always given too great. In the enume-

ration which lately took place in this country, while it is ſuppoſed with reaſon, that the regiſtry of marriages is nearly correct, it is known with certainty, that there are very great omiſſions in the births and deaths; and it is probable that ſimilar omiſſions, though not perhaps to the ſame extent, prevail in other countries.

To form a judgment of the prolifickneſs of marriages, taken as they occur, including ſecond and third marriages, let us cut off a certain period of the regiſters of any country, 30 years for inſtance, and inquire what is the number of births which have been produced by all the marriages included in the period cut off. It is evident, that with the marriages at the beginning of the period will be arranged a number of births proceeding from marriages not included in the period; and at the end, a number of births produced by the marriages included in the period, will be found arranged with the marriages of a ſucceeding period. Now if we could ſubtract the former number, and add the latter, we ſhould obtain exactly all the births produced by the marriages of the period, and of courſe the real prolifickneſs of thoſe marriages. If the population be ſtationary, the number of births to be added would exactly equal the number to be ſubtracted, and the proportion of births to marriages,

riages, as found in the regiſters, would exactly repreſent the real prolifickneſs of marriages. But if the population be either increaſing or decreaſing, the number to be added would never be equal to the number to be ſubtracted; and the proportion of births to marriages in the regiſters would never truly repreſent the prolifickneſs of marriages. In an increaſing population the number to be added would evidently be greater than the number to be ſubtracted, and of courſe the proportion of births to marriages, as found in the regiſters, would always be too ſmall to repreſent the true prolifickneſs of marriages. And the contrary effect would take place in a decreaſing population. The queſtion therefore is, what we are to add and what to ſubtract, when the births and deaths are not equal.

The average proportion of births to marriages in Europe is about 4 to 1. Let us ſuppoſe for the ſake of illuſtration, that each marriage yields four children, one every other year[a]. In this caſe it is evident, that wherever you begin your period in the regiſters, the marriages of the preceding eight years will only have produced half of their births, and the

[a] In the ſtatiſtical account of Scotland it is ſaid, that the average diſtance between the children of the ſame family has been calculated to be about two years.

other half will be arranged with the marriages included in the period, and ought to be ſubtracted from them. In the ſame manner, the marriages of the laſt eight years of the period will only have produced half of their births, and the other half ought to be added. But half of the births of any eight years may be conſidered as nearly equal to all the births of the ſucceeding $3\frac{3}{4}$ years. In inſtances of the moſt rapid increaſe it will rather exceed the births of the next $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, and in caſes of ſlow increaſe approach towards the births of the next 4 years. The mean therefore may be taken at $3\frac{3}{4}$ years[a]. Conſequently if we ſubtract the births of the firſt $3\frac{3}{4}$ years of the period, and add the births of the $3\frac{3}{4}$ years ſubſequent to the period, we ſhall have a number of births nearly equal to the births produced by all the marriages included in the period, and of courſe the prolificknes of theſe marriages. But if the population of a country be increaſing regularly, and the births, deaths, and marriages continue always to bear the ſame proportion to each other, and to the whole population, it is evident that all the births of any period will bear the ſame proportion to all the births of any other period of the ſame extent, taken a

[a] According to the rate of increaſe which is now taking place in England, the period by calculation would be about $3\frac{3}{4}$ years.

certain

certain number of years later, as the births of any ſingle year to the births of a ſingle year taken the ſame number of years later; and the ſame will be true with regard to the marriages. And conſequently to eſtimate the prolificknefs of marriages we have only to compare the marriages of the preſent or any other year with the births of a ſubſequent year taken $3\frac{3}{4}$ years later.

We have ſuppoſed in the preſent inſtance, that each marriage yields four births; but the average proportion of births to marriages in Europe is 4 to 1, and as the population of Europe is known to be increaſing at preſent, the prolificknefs of marriages muſt be greater than 4. If allowing for this circumſtance we take the diſtance of 4 years inſtead of $3\frac{3}{4}$ years, we ſhall probably be not far from the truth. And though undoubtedly the period will differ in different countries, yet it will not differ ſo much as we might at firſt imagine; becauſe in countries where the marriages are more prolific, the births generally follow at ſhorter intervals, and where they are leſs prolific at longer intervals; and with different degrees of prolificknefs, the length of the period might ſtill remain the ſame [a]. It

[a] In places where there are many exports and imports of people, the calculations will of courſe be diſturbed. In towns, particularly, where there is a frequent change of inhabitants,

It will follow from theſe obſervations, that the more rapid is the increaſe of population, the more will the real prolifickneſs of marriages exceed the proportion of births to marriages in the regiſters.

The rule which has been here laid down, attempts to eſtimate the prolifickneſs of marriages taken as they occur, but this prolifickneſs ſhould be carefully diſtinguiſhed from the prolifickneſs of firſt marriages and of married women, and ſtill more from the natural prolifickneſs of women in general, taken at the moſt favourable age. It is probable that the natural prolifickneſs of women is nearly the ſame in moſt parts of the world; but the prolifickneſs of marriages is liable to be affected by a variety of circumſtances peculiar to each country; and particularly by the number of late marriages. In all countries the ſecond and third marriages alone form a moſt important conſideration, and materially influence the average proportions. According to Suſſmilch, in all Pomerania, from 1748 to 1756 both included, the number of perſons who married were 56,956, and of theſe 10,586 were widows and widowers[a]. According to Buſching in

and where it ſo often happens that the marriages of the people in the neighbouring country are celebrated, the inferences from the proportion of births to marriages are not to be depended on.

[a] Gottliche Ordnung, vol. i. tables, p. 98.

Pruſſia

Pruſſia and Sileſia for the year 1781, out of 29,308 perſons who married, 4,841 were widows and widowers[a], and conſequently the proportion of marriages will be given full one ſixth too much. In eſtimating the prolifickneſs of married women the number of illegitimate births[b] would tend, though in a very ſlight degree, to counterbalance the overplus of marriages; and as it is found that the number of widowers who marry again is greater than the number of widows, the whole of the correction ſhould not on this account be applied; but in eſtimating the proportion of the born which lives to marry from a compariſon of the marriages and deaths, which is what we are now about to proceed to, the whole of this correction is always neceſſary.

To find the proportion of the born which lives to marry, we muſt firſt ſubtract one ſixth from the marriages, and then compare the marriages of any year ſo corrected, with the deaths in the regiſters at ſuch a diſtance from them, as is equal to the difference between the average age of marriage and the average age of death.

Thus, for example, if the proportion of marriages to deaths were as 1 to 3, then ſubtract-

[a] Suſſmilch, vol. iii. tables, p. 95.

[b] In France before the revolution the proportion of illegitimate births was $\frac{1}{47}$ of the whole number. Probably it is leſs in this country.

ing one ſixth from the marriages this proportion would be as 5 to 18, and the number of perſons marrying annually the firſt time would be to the number of annual deaths as 10 to 18. Suppoſing in this caſe the mean age of death to be ten years later than the mean age of marriage, in which ten years the deaths would increaſe $\frac{1}{9}$, then the number of perſons marrying annually the firſt time, compared with the number of annual deaths, at the diſtance of the difference between the age of marriage and the age of death, would be as 10 to 20; from which it would follow that exactly half of the born lived to marry.

The grounds of this rule will appear from the following obſervations on regiſters in general.

In a country in which the population is ſtationary, the contemporary deaths compared with the births will be equal, and will of courſe repreſent the deaths of all the born; and the marriages, or more properly the number of married perſons compared with both the births and deaths, will, when a proper allowance has been made for ſecond and third marriages, repreſent the true proportion of the born which lives to marry. But if the population be either increaſing or decreaſing, and the births, deaths, and marriages increaſing or decreaſing in the ſame ratio, then the deaths compared with the births,

and

and the marriages compared with the births and deaths, will ceaſe to expreſs what they did before, unleſs the events which are contemporary in the regiſters are alſo contemporary in the order of nature.

In the firſt place it is evident that death cannot be contemporary with birth, but muſt on an average be always at ſuch a diſtance from it, as is equal to the expectation of life, or the mean age of death. Conſequently though the deaths of all the born are, or will be, in the regiſters, where there are no emigrations, yet, except when the population is ſtationary, the contemporary periods of births and deaths never ſhow this, and we can only expect to find the deaths equal to the births, if the deaths be taken at ſuch a diſtance from the births in the regiſters as is equal to the expectation of life. And in fact, thus taken the births and deaths will always be found equal.

Secondly, the marriages of any year can never be contemporary with the births from which they have reſulted, but muſt always be at ſuch a diſtance from them as is equal to the average age of marriage. If the population be increaſing, the marriages of the preſent year have reſulted from a ſmaller number of births than the births of the preſent year,

and

and of courſe the marriages, compared with the contemporary births, will always be too few to repreſent the proportion of the born which lives to marry, and the contrary will take place if the population be decreaſing; and to find this proportion, we muſt compare the marriages of any year with the births of a previous year at the diſtance of the average age of marriage.

Thirdly, the average age of marriage will almoſt always be much nearer to the average age of death than marriage is to birth; and conſequently the annual marriages compared with the contemporary annual deaths will much more nearly repreſent the true proportion of the born living to marry, than the marriages compared with the births*. The marriages

* Dr. Price very juſtly ſays (Obſerv. on Reverſ. Pay. vol. i. p. 269. 4th edit.) "that the general effect of an increaſe "while it is going on in a country is to render the proportion of perſons marrying annually, to the annual deaths "*greater* and to the annual births *leſs* than the true proportion "marrying out of any given number born. This proportion "generally lies between the other two proportions, but always neareſt the firſt." In theſe obſervations I entirely agree with him, but in a note to this paſſage he appears to me to fall into an error. He ſays, that if the prolificknes of marriages be increaſed (the *probabilities of life* and *the encouragement to marriage* remaining the ſame) both the annual births and burials would increaſe in proportion to the annual weddings

marriages compared with the births, after a proper allowance has been made for ſecond and third marriages, can never repreſent the true proportion of the born living to marry, unleſs when the population is abſolutely ſtationary; but although the population be increaſing or decreaſing according to any ratio, yet the average age of marriage may ſtill be equal to the average of death; and in this caſe the marriages in the regiſters compared with the contemporary

dings. That the proportion of annual births would increaſe is certainly true, and I here acknowledge my error in differing from Dr. Price on this point in my laſt edition; but I ſtill think that the proportion of burials to weddings would not neceſſarily increaſe under the circumſtances here ſuppoſed.

The reaſon why the proportion of births to weddings increaſes is, that the births occurring in the order of nature conſiderably prior to the marriages which reſult from them, their increaſe will affect the regiſter of births much more than the contemporary regiſter of marriages. But the ſame reaſon by no means holds with regard to the deaths, the average age of which is generally later than the age of marriage. And in this caſe, after the firſt interval between birth and marriage, the permanent effect would be, that the regiſter of marriages would be more affected by the increaſe of births, than the contemporary regiſter of deaths; and conſequently the proportion of the burials to the weddings would be rather decreaſed than increaſed. From not attending to the circumſtance that the average age of marriage may often be conſiderably earlier than the mean age of death, the general concluſion alſo which Dr. Price draws in this note does not appear to be ſtrictly correct.

deaths,

deaths, after the correction for ſecond and third marriages, will repreſent the true proportion of the born living to marry[a]. Generally however, when an increaſe of population is going forwards, the average age of marriage is leſs than the average of death, and then the proportion of marriages compared with the contemporary deaths, will be too great to repreſent the true proportion of the born living to marry, and to find this proportion, we muſt compare the marriages of any particular year with the deaths of a ſubſequent year at ſuch a diſtance from it in the regiſters, as is equal to the difference between the average age of marriage and the average age of death.

There is no abſolutely neceſſary connection between the average age of marriage and the average age of death. In a country the reſources of which will allow of a rapid increaſe of population, the expectation of life, or the average

[a] The reader will be aware, that as all the born muſt die, deaths may in ſome caſes be taken as ſynonimous with births. If we had the deaths regiſtered of all the births which had taken place in a country during a certain period, diſtinguiſhing the married from the unmarried, it is evident, that the number of thoſe who died married, compared with the whole number of deaths, would accurately expreſs the proportion of the *births* which had lived to marry.

age

age of death, may be extremely high, and yet the age of marriage be very early, and the marriages then, compared with the contemporary deaths in the regiſters, would, even after the correction for ſecond and third marriages, be very much too great to repreſent the true proportion of the born living to marry. In ſuch a country we might ſuppoſe the average age of death to be 40, and the age of marriage only 20; and in this caſe, which however would be a rare one, the diſtance between marriage and death would be the ſame as between birth and marriage.

If we apply theſe obſervations to regiſters in general, though we ſhall ſeldom be able to obtain accurately the true proportion of the born living to marry, on account of our not knowing the average age of marriage, yet we may draw many uſeful inferences from the information which they contain, and reconcile many of the difficulties with which they are accompanied; and it will generally be found, that in thoſe countries where the marriages bear a very large proportion to the deaths, we ſhall ſee reaſon to believe that the age of marriage is much earlier than the average age of death.

In the Ruſſian table for the year 1799, produced

duced by Mr. Tooke, and referred to p. 372, the proportion of marriages to deaths appeared to be as 100 to 200. When corrected for ſecond and third marriages, by ſubtracting one ſixth from the marriages it will be as 100 to 252. From which it would ſeem to follow that out of 252 births 200 of them had lived to marry; but we can ſcarcely conceive any country to be ſo healthy, as that 200 out of 252 ſhould live to marry. If however we ſuppoſe what ſeems to be probable, that the age of marriage in Ruſſia is 15 years earlier than the expectation of life or the average age of death, then, in order to find the proportion which lives to marry, we muſt compare the marriages of the preſent year, with the deaths 15 years later. Suppoſing the births to deaths to be (as ſtated p. 372) 183 to 100, and the mortality 1 in 50, the yearly increaſe will be about $\frac{1}{60}$ of the population; and conſequently in 15 years the deaths will have increaſed a little above .28; and the reſult will be, that the marriages compared with the deaths 15 years later, will be as 100 to 322. Out of 322 births it will appear that 200 live to marry, which from the known healthineſs of children in Ruſſia, and the early age of marriage, is not an improbable proportion.

The proportion of marriages to births, being as 100 to 385, the prolifickneſs of marriages, according to the rule laid down, will be as 100 to 411, or each marriage will on an average, including ſecond and third marriages, produce 4.11 births.

The liſts given in the earlier part of the chapter on Ruſſia are probably not correct. It is ſuſpected with reaſon, that there are conſiderable omiſſions both in the births and deaths, but particularly in the deaths, and conſequently the proportion of marriages is given too great. There may alſo be a further reaſon for this large proportion of marriages in Ruſſia. The Empreſs Catherine, in her inſtructions for a new code of laws, notices a cuſtom prevalent among the peaſants, of parents obliging their ſons, while actually children, to marry fullgrown women in order to ſave the expenſe of buying female ſlaves. Theſe women, it is ſaid, generally become the miſtreſſes of the father, and the cuſtom is particularly reprobated by the Empreſs as prejudicial to population. This practice would naturally occaſion a more than uſual number of ſecond and third marriages, and of courſe more than uſually increaſe the proportion of marriages to births in the regiſters.

In the tranſactions of the ſociety at Philadelphia,

phia, (vol. iii. No. vii. p. 25) there is a paper by Mr. Barton, entitled *Observations on the probability of life in the United States,* in which it appears that the proportion of marriages to births is as 1 to $4\frac{1}{2}$. He mentions indeed $6\frac{1}{2}$, but his numbers give only $4\frac{1}{2}$. As however this proportion was taken principally from towns it is probable, that the births are given too low, and I think we may very safely take as many as five for the average of towns and country. According to the same authority, the mortality is about 1 in 45, and if the population doubles every 25 years, the births would be about 1 in 20. The proportion of marriages to deaths would on these suppositions be as 1 to $2\frac{2}{9}$; and corrected for second and third marriages as 1 to 2.7 nearly. But we cannot suppose that out of 27 births 20 should live to marry. If however the age of marriage be ten years earlier than the mean age of death, which is highly probable, we must compare the marriages of the present year with the deaths ten years later, in order to obtain the true proportion of the born which lives to marry. According to the progress of population here stated, the increase of the deaths in ten years would be a little above $\frac{3}{5}$, and the result will be that 200 out of 351, or

about

about 20 out of 35, inſtead of 20 out of 27 will live to marry[a]. The marriages compared with the births 4 years later, according to the rule laid down, will in this caſe give 5.58 for the prolifickneſs of marriages. The calculations of Mr. Barton reſpecting the age to which half of the born live cannot poſſibly be applicable to America in general. The regiſters on which they are founded are taken from Philadelphia, and one or two ſmall towns and villages, which do not appear to be ſo healthy as the moderate towns of Europe, and therefore can form no criterion for the country in general.

In England the average proportion of marriages to births appears of late years to have been

[a] If the proportions mentioned by Mr. Barton be juſt, the expectation of life in America is conſiderably leſs than in Ruſſia, which is the reaſon that I have taken only 10 years for the difference between the age of marriage and the age of death, inſtead of 15 years, as in Ruſſia. According to the mode adopted by Dr. Price, (vol. i. p. 272.) of eſtimating the expectation of life in countries the population of which is increaſing, this expectation in Ruſſia would be about 38, (births $\frac{1}{26}$, deaths $\frac{1}{50}$, mean $\frac{1}{38}$), and ſuppoſing the age of marriage to be 23, the difference would be 15.

In America the expectation of life would, upon the ſame principles be only $32\frac{1}{2}$, (births $\frac{1}{20}$, deaths $\frac{1}{45}$, mean $\frac{1}{32\frac{1}{2}}$), and ſuppoſing the age of marriage $22\frac{1}{2}$ the difference would be 10.

about 100 to 350. If we add $\frac{1}{7}$ to the births, inſtead of $\frac{1}{6}$, which in the chapter on *the Checks to Population in England* I conjectured might be nearly the amount of the omiſſions in the births and deaths, this will allow for the circumſtance of illegitimate births; and the marriages will then be to the births as 1 to 4, to the deaths as 1 to 3. Corrected for ſecond and third marriages, the proportion of marriages to deaths will be as 1 to 3.6. Suppoſing the age of marrige in England about 7 years earlier than the mean age of death, the increaſe in theſe 7 years according to the preſent progreſs of population of $\frac{1}{1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{0}}$ yearly would be .06, and the proportion living to marry would be 200 out of 381, or rather more than half[a]. The marriages compared

[a] Births $\frac{1}{3\frac{1}{0}}$, deaths $\frac{1}{4\frac{1}{0}}$, mean $\frac{1}{3\frac{1}{5}}$, and on the ſuppoſition that the age of marriage is 28, the difference would be 7. With regard to the allowance which I have made here and in a former chapter for the omiſſions in the births and deaths, I wiſh to obſerve, that as I had no very certain and ſatisfactory grounds on which to proceed, it may be incorrect, and perhaps too great, though aſſuming this allowance the mortality appears to be extraordinarily ſmall conſidering the circumſtances of the country. It ſhould be remarked however, that in countries which are different in their rates of increaſe, the annual mortality is a very incorrect criterion of their comparative healthineſs.

pared with the births 4 years later will give 4.136 for the prolifickneſs of marriages.

Theſe inſtances will be ſufficient to ſhow the mode of applying the rules which have been given, in order to form a judgment, from regiſters, of the prolifickneſs of marriages, and the proportion of the born which lives to marry.

It will be obſerved how very important the correction for ſecond and third marriages is. Suppoſing each marriage to yield 4 births, and the births and deaths to be equal, it would at firſt appear neceſſary that in order to produce this effect, exactly half of the born ſhould live to marry; but if on account of the ſecond and third marriages we ſubtract $\frac{1}{6}$ from the marriages, and then compare them with the deaths, the proportion will be as 1 to $4\frac{4}{5}$, and it will appear that inſtead of one half it will only be neceſſary that 2 children out of $4\frac{4}{5}$ ſhould live to marry. Upon the ſame principle if the

ineſs. When an increaſe is going forward the portion of the population which becomes extinct every year is very different from the expectation of life, as has appeared very clearly in the caſes of Ruſſia and America juſt noticed. And as the increaſe of population in England has of late years been more rapid than in France, this circumſtance will undoubtedly contribute in part to the great difference in the annual mortality.

births were to the marriages as 4 to 1, and exactly half of the born lived to marry, it might be ſuppoſed at firſt that the population would be ſtationary, but if we ſubtract $\frac{1}{6}$ from the marriages, and then take the proportion of deaths to marriages as 4 to 1, we ſhall find that the deaths in the regiſters compared with the marriages would only be as $3\frac{1}{3}$ to 1; and the births would be to the deaths as 4 to $3\frac{1}{3}$, or 12 to 10, which is a tolerably faſt rate of increaſe.

Three cauſes appear to operate in producing an exceſs of the births above the deaths, 1. the prolifickneſs of marriages; 2. the proportion of the born which lives to marry, and 3. the earlineſs of theſe marriages compared with the expectation of life, or the ſhortneſs of a generation by marriage and birth, compared with the paſſing away of a generation by death. This latter cauſe Dr. Price ſeems to have omitted to conſider. For though he very juſtly ſays, that the rate of increaſe, ſuppoſing the prolific powers the ſame, depends upon the encouragement to marriage and the expectation of a child juſt born; yet in explaining himſelf, he ſeems to conſider an increaſe in the expectation of life, merely as it affects the increaſe of the number

of

of perſons who reach maturity and marry, and not as it affects, beſides, the diſtance between the age of marriage and the age of death. But it is evident that if there be any principle of increaſe, that is, if one marriage in the preſent generation yields more than one in the next, including ſecond and third marriages, the quicker theſe generations are repeated, compared with the paſſing away of a generation by death, the more rapid will be the increaſe.

A favourable change in either of theſe three cauſes the other two remaining the ſame, will clearly produce an effect upon population, and occaſion a greater exceſs of the births above the deaths in the regiſters. With regard to the two firſt cauſes, though an increaſe in either of them will produce the ſame kind of effect on the proportion of births to deaths, yet their effects on the proportion of marriages to births will be in oppoſite directions. The greater is the prolificknes of marriages the greater will be the proportion of births to marriages, and the greater is the number of the born which lives to be married, the leſs will be the proportion of births to marriages[a].

Conſequently

[a] Dr. Price himſelf has inſiſted ſtrongly upon this, (vol. i. p. 270, 4th edit.) and yet he ſays, (p. 275) that healthfulneſs

Conſequently if within certain limits, the prolifickneſs of marriages and the number of the born living to marry increaſe at the ſame time, the proportion of births to marriages in the regiſters may ſtill remain unaltered. And this is the reaſon why the regiſters of different countries with reſpect to births and marriages are often found the ſame under very different rates of increaſe.

neſs and prolifickneſs are probably cauſes of increaſe ſeldom ſeparated, and refers to regiſters of births and weddings as a proof of it. But though theſe cauſes may undoubtedly exiſt together, yet if Dr. Price's reaſoning be juſt, ſuch coexiſtence cannot poſſibly be inferred from the liſts of births and weddings. Indeed the two countries, Sweden and France, to the regiſters of which he refers as ſhowing the prolifickneſs of their marriages, are known to be by no means remarkably healthy; and the regiſters of towns to which he alludes, though they may ſhow as he intends, a want of prolifickneſs, yet according to his previous reaſoning ſhow at the ſame time great healthineſs, and therefore ought not to be produced as a proof of the abſence of both. The general fact that Dr. Price wiſhes to eſtabliſh may ſtill remain true, that country ſituations are both more healthy and more prolific than towns; but this fact certainly cannot be inferred merely from liſts of births and marriages. With regard to the different countries of Europe, it will generally be found, that thoſe are the moſt healthy which are the leaſt prolific, and thoſe the moſt prolific which are the leaſt healthy. The earlier age of marriage in unhealthy countries is the obvious reaſon of this fact.

The

The proportion of births to marriages, indeed, forms no criterion whatever, by which to judge of the rate of increaſe. The population of a country may be ſtationary or declining with a proportion as 5 to 1, and may be increaſing with ſome rapidity with a proportion as 4 to 1. But given the rate of increaſe which may be obtained from other ſources, it is clearly deſireable to find in the regiſters a ſmall, rather than a large proportion of births to marriages; becauſe the ſmaller this proportion is the greater muſt be the proportion of the born which lives to marry, and of courſe the more healthy muſt be the country.

Crome[a] obſerves that when the marriages of a country yield leſs than 4 births, the population is in a very precarious ſtate, and he eſtimates the prolifickneſs of marriages by the proportion of yearly births to marriages. If this obſervation were juſt, the population of many countries of Europe would be in a precarious ſtate, as in many countries the proportion of births to marriages in the regiſters is rather below than above 4 to 1. It has been ſhown in what manner this proportion in the regiſters ſhould be corrected in order to make it a juſt

[a] Ueber die Bevölkerung der Europais. Staat. p. 91.

repreſentation of the prolifickneſs of marriages, and if a large part of the born live to marry, and the age of marriage be conſiderably earlier than the expectation of life, ſuch a proportion in the regiſters is by no means inconſiſtent with a rapid increaſe. In Ruſſia it has appeared that the proportion of births to marriages is leſs than 4 to 1, and yet its population increaſes faſter than that of any other nation in Europe. In England the population increaſes more rapidly than in France, and yet in England the proportion of births to marriages, when allowance has been made for omiſſions, is about 4 to 1, in France $4\frac{4}{5}$ to 1. To occaſion ſo rapid a progreſs as that which has taken place in America, it will indeed be neceſſary that all the cauſes of increaſe ſhould be called into action; and if the prolifickneſs of marriages be very great, the proportion of births to marriages will certainly be above 4 to 1; but in all ordinary caſes, where the whole power of procreation has not room to expand itſelf, it is ſurely better that the actual increaſe ſhould ariſe from that degree of healthineſs in the early ſtages of life, which cauſes a great proportion of the born to live to maturity and to marry, than from a great degree of prolifickneſs accompanied by a great

great mortality. And conſequently in all ordinary caſes, a proportion of births to marriages as 4 or leſs than 4 to 1 cannot be conſidered as an unfavourable ſign.

It ſhould be obſerved that it does not follow that the marriages of a country are early, or that the preventive check to population does not prevail, becauſe the greater part of the born lives to marry. In ſuch countries as Norway and Switzerland, where half of the born live to above 40, it is evident that though rather more than half live to marry, a large portion of the people between the ages of 20 and 40 would be living in an unmarried ſtate, and the preventive check would appear to prevail to a great degree. In England it is probable that half of the born live to above 35, and though rather more than half live to marry, the preventive check might prevail conſiderably (as we know it does), though not to the ſame extent as in Norway and Switzerland.

The preventive check is perhaps beſt meaſured by the ſmallneſs of the proportion of yearly births to the whole population. The proportion of yearly marriages to the population is only a juſt criterion in countries ſimilarly circumſtanced, but is incorrect, where there is a difference in

in the prolifickneſs of marriages, or in the proportion of the population under the age of puberty, and in the rate of increaſe. If all the marriages of a country, be they few or many, take place young, and be conſequently prolific, it is evident that to produce the ſame proportion of births, a ſmaller proportion of marriages will be neceſſary; or with the ſame proportion of marriages a greater proportion of births will be produced. This latter caſe ſeems to be applicable to France, where both the births and deaths are greater than in Sweden, though the proportion of marriages is nearly the ſame or rather leſs. And when in two countries compared, one of them has a much greater part of its population under the age of puberty than the other, it is evident, that any general proportion of the yearly marriages to the whole population will not imply the ſame operation of the preventive check among thoſe of a marriageable age.

It is in part the ſmall proportion of the population under the age of puberty, as well as the influx of ſtrangers, that occaſions in towns a greater proportion of marriages than in the country, although there can be little doubt that the preventive check prevails moſt in towns. The converſe of this will alſo be true, and conſequently in ſuch a country as America where

half of the population is under ſixteen, the proportion of yearly marriages will not accurately expreſs how little the preventive check really operates.

But on the ſuppoſition of nearly the ſame natural prolifickneſs in the women of moſt countries, the ſmallneſs of the proportion of births will generally indicate, with tolerable exactneſs, the degree in which the preventive check prevails, whether ariſing principally from late, and conſequently unprolific marriages, or from a large proportion of the population above the age of puberty dying unmarried.

That the reader may ſee at once the rate of increaſe, and the period of doubling, which would reſult from any obſerved proportion of births to deaths, and of theſe to the whole population, I ſubjoin two tables from Suſſmilch, calculated by Euler, which I believe are very correct. The firſt is confined to the ſuppoſition of a mortality of 1 in 36, and therefore can only be applied to countries where ſuch a mortality is known to take place. The other is general, depending ſolely upon the proportion which the exceſs of the births above the burials bears to the whole population, and therefore may be applied univerſally to all countries, whatever may be the degree of their mortality.

It

It will be obſerved, that when the proportion between the births and burials is given, the period of doubling will be ſhorter, the greater the mortality; becauſe the births as well as deaths are increaſed by this ſuppoſition, and they both bear a greater proportion to the whole population than if the mortality were ſmaller, and there were a greater number of people in advanced life.

The mortality of Ruſſia, according to Mr. Tooke, is 1 in 58, and the proportion of births 1 in 26. Allowing for the omiſſions in the burials, if we aſſume the mortality to be 1 in 52, then the births will be to the deaths as 2 to 1, and the proportion which the exceſs of births bears to the whole population will be $\frac{1}{52}$[a]. According to Table II. the period of doubling will, in this caſe, be about 36 years. But if we were to keep the proportion of births to deaths as 2 to 1, and ſuppoſe a mortality of 1 in 36, as in Table I. the exceſs of births above the burials would be $\frac{1}{72}$ of the whole population, and the period of doubling would be only 25 years.

[a] The proportions here mentioned are different from thoſe which have been taken from the additional table in Mr. Tooke's ſecond edition; but they are aſſumed here as more eaſily and clearly illuſtrating the ſubject.

TABLE

TABLE I.

When in any country there are 100,000 perſons living, and the mortality is 1 in 36.

If the proportion of deaths to births be as	Then the exceſs of the births will be	The proportion of the exceſs of the births, to the whole pepulation, will be	And therefore the period of doubling will be
10 : 11	277	$\frac{1}{360}$	250 years.
10 : 12	555	$\frac{1}{180}$	125
10 : 13	833	$\frac{1}{120}$	$83\frac{1}{2}$
10 : 14	1110	$\frac{1}{90}$	$62\frac{3}{4}$
10 : 15	1388	$\frac{1}{72}$	$50\frac{1}{4}$
10 : 16	1666	$\frac{1}{60}$	42
10 : 17	1943	$\frac{1}{51}$	$35\frac{3}{4}$
10 : 18	2221	$\frac{1}{45}$	$31\frac{2}{3}$
10 : 19	2499	$\frac{1}{40}$	28
10 : 20	2777	$\frac{1}{36}$	$25\frac{3}{10}$
10 : 22	3332	$\frac{1}{30}$	$21\frac{1}{8}$
10 : 25	4165	$\frac{1}{24}$	17
10 : 30	5554	$\frac{1}{18}$	$12\frac{4}{5}$

TABLE II.

The proportion of the exceſs of births above the deaths, to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years, and ten thouſandth parts.	The proportion of the exceſs of births above the deaths, to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years, and ten thouſandth parts.
1 : 10	7.2722	1 : 21	14.9000
1 : 11	7.9659	1 : 22	15.5932
1 : 12	8.6595	1 : 23	16.2864
1 : 13	9.3530	1 : 24	16.9797
1 : 14	10.0465	1 : 25	17.6729
1 : 15	10.7400	1 : 26	18.3662
1 : 16	11.4333	1 : 27	19.0594
1 : 17	12.1266	1 : 28	19.7527
1 : 18	12.8200	1 : 29	20.4458
1 : 19	13.5133	1 : 30	21.1391
1 : 20	14.2066		

TABLE

TABLE II. *continued.*

The proportion of the excess of births above the deaths, to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years, and ten thousandth parts.	The proportion of the excess of births above the deaths, to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years, and ten thousandth parts.
1 : 32	22.5255	1 : 210	145.9072
1 : 34	23.9119	1 : 220	152.8387
1 : 36	25.2983	1 : 230	159.7702
1 : 38	26.6847	1 : 240	166.7017
1 : 40	28.0711	1 : 250	173.6332
1 : 42	29.4574	1 : 260	180.5647
1 : 44	30.8438	1 : 270	187.4961
1 : 46	32.2302	1 : 280	194.4275
1 : 48	33.6165	1 : 290	201.3590
1 : 50	35.0029	1 : 300	208.2905
1 : 55	38.4687	1 : 310	215.2220
1 : 60	41.9345	1 : 320	222.1535
1 : 65	45.4003	1 : 330	229.0850
1 : 70	48.8661	1 : 340	236.0164
1 : 75	52.3318	1 : 350	242.9479
1 : 80	55.7977	1 : 360	249.8794
1 : 85	59.2634	1 : 370	256.8109
1 : 90	62.7292	1 : 380	263.7425
1 : 95	66.1950	1 : 390	270.6740
1 : 100	69.6607	1 : 400	277.6055
1 : 110	76.5923	1 : 410	284.5370
1 : 120	83.5230	1 : 420	291.4685
1 : 130	90.4554	1 : 430	298.4000
1 : 140	97.3868	1 : 440	305.3314
1 : 150	104.3183	1 : 450	312.2629
1 : 160	111.2598	1 : 460	319.1943
1 : 170	118.1813	1 : 470	326.1258
1 : 180	125.1128	1 : 480	333.0573
1 : 190	132.0443	1 : 490	339.9888
1 : 200	138.9757	1 : 500	346.9202
		1 : 1000	693.49

CHAP. X.

Effects of Epidemics on Regiſters of Births, Deaths, and Marriages.

It appears clearly, from the very valuable tables of mortality which Suſſmilch has collected, and which include periods of 50 or 60 years, that all the countries of Europe are ſubject to periodical ſickly ſeaſons, which check their increaſe; and very few are exempt from thoſe great and waſting plagues, which, once or twice, perhaps, in a century, ſweep off the third or fourth part of their inhabitants. The way in which theſe periods of mortality affect all the general proportions of births, deaths, and marriages, is ſtrikingly illuſtrated in the tables for Pruſſia and Lithuania, from the year 1692 to the year 1757[a].

[a] Suſſmilch, Gottliche Ordnung, vol. i. table xxi. p. 83, of the tables.

TABLE III.

Annual Average.	Marriages	Births.	Deaths.	Proportion of marriages to births.	Proportion of deaths to births.
5 yrs to 1697	5747	19715	14862	10 : 34	100 : 132
5 yrs — 1702	6070	24112	14474	10 : 39	100 : 165
6 yrs — 1708	6082	26896	16430	10 : 44	100 : 163
In 1709 & 1710	a plague	number destroyed in 2 years.	247733		
In 1711	12028	32522	10131	10 : 27	100 : 320
In 1712	6267	22970	10445	10 : 36	100 : 220
5 yrs to 1716	4968	21603	11984	10 : 43	100 : 180
5 yrs — 1721	4324	21396	12039	10 . 49	100 : 177
5 yrs — 1726	4719	21452	12863	10 : 45	100 : 166
5 yrs — 1731	4808	29554	12825	10 : 42	100 : 160
4 yrs — 1735	5424	22692	15475	10 : 41	100 : 146
In 1736	5280	21859	26371	Epidemic	
In 1737	5765	18930	24480	years.	
5 yrs to 1742	5582	22099	15255	10 : 39	100 : 144
4 yrs — 1746	5469	25275	15117	10 : 46	100 : 167
5 yrs — 1751	6423	28235	17272	10 : 43	100 : 163
5 yrs — 1756	5599	28392	19154	10 : 50	100 : 148
In the 16 yrs before the plague	95585	380516	245763	10 : 39	100 : 154
In 46 yrs after the plague	248777	1083872	690324	10 : 43	100 : 157
In 62 good yrs	344361	1464388 936087	936087	10 : 43	100 : 156
More born than died		528301			
In the 2 plague years	5477	23977	247733		
In all the 64 years including the plague	340838	1488365 1183820	1183820	10 : 42	100 : 125
More born than died		304745			

The table, from which this is copied, contains the marriages, births, and deaths, for every particular year during the whole period; but to bring it into a ſmaller compaſs, I have retained only the general average drawn from the ſhorter periods of five and four years, except where the numbers for the individual years preſented any fact worthy of particular obſervation. The year 1711, immediately ſucceeding the great plague, is not included by Suſſmilch in any general average; but he has given the particular numbers, and if they be accurate they ſhow the very ſudden and prodigious effect of a great mortality on the number of marriages.

Suſſmilch calculates that above one third of the people was deſtroyed by the plague; and yet, notwithſtanding this great diminution of the population, it will appear by a reference to the table, that the number of marriages in the year 1711 was very nearly double the average of the ſix years preceding the plague[a]. To produce

[a] The number of people before the plague, according to Suſſmilch's calculation, (vol. i. ch. ix. ſect. 173.) was 570,000, from which, if we ſubtract 247,733, the number dying in the plague, the remainder 322,267 will be the population after the plague; which, divided by the number of marriages and the number of births for the year 1711, makes the mar-

duce this effect we muſt ſuppoſe that almoſt all who were at the age of puberty were induced, from the demand for labour, and the number of vacant employments, immediately to marry. This immenſe number of marriages in the year could not poſſibly be accompanied by a great proportional number of births, becauſe we cannot ſuppoſe that the new marriages could each yield more than one birth in the year, and the reſt muſt come from the marriages which had continued unbroken through the plague. We cannot therefore be ſurpriſed that the proportion of births to marriages in this year ſhould be only 2.7 to 1, or 27 to 10. But though the proportion of births to marriages could not be great; yet on account of the extraordinary number of marriages, the abſolute number of births muſt be great; and as the number of deaths would naturally be ſmall, the proportion of births to deaths is prodigious, being 320 to 100; an exceſs of births as great, perhaps, as has ever been known in America.

riages about one twenty-ſixth part of the population, and the births about one tenth part. Such extraordinary proportions could only occur in any country, in an individual year. If they were to continue, they would double the population in leſs than ten years.

In the next year, 1712, the number of marriages muſt of courſe diminiſh exceedingly, becauſe, nearly all who were at the age of puberty having married the year before, the marriages of this year would be ſupplied principally by thoſe who had arrived at this age, ſubſequent to the plague. Still however, as all who were marriageable had not probably married the year before, the number of marriages in the year 1712 is great in proportion to the population; and though not much more than half of the number which took place during the preceding year, is greater than the average number in the laſt period before the plague. The proportion of births to marriages in 1712, though greater than in the preceding year on account of the ſmaller comparative number of marriages, is, with reference to other countries, not great, being, as 3.6 to 1, or 36 to 10. But the proportion of births to deaths, though leſs than in the preceding year, when ſo very large a proportion of the people married, is, with reference to other countries, ſtill unuſually great, being as 220 to 100; an exceſs of births which, calculated on a mortality of 1 in 36, would double the population of a country (according to Table I. page 29) in 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ years.

From this period the number of annual marriages begins to be regulated by the diminished population, and of course to sink considerably below the average number of marriages before the plague, depending principally on the number of persons rising annually to a marriageable state. In the year 1720, about nine or ten years after the plague, the number of annual marriages, either from accident, or the beginning operation of the preventive check, is the smallest; and it is at this time that the proportion of births to marriages rises very high. In the period from 1717 to 1721 the proportion, as appears by the Table, is 49 to 10; and in the particular years 1719 and 1720, it is 50 to 10 and 55 to 10.

Sussmilch draws the attention of his readers to the fruitfulness of marriages in Prussia after the plague, and mentions the proportion of 50 annual births to 10 annual marriages as a proof of it. There are the best reasons, from the general average, for supposing that the marriages in Prussia at this time were very fruitful; but certainly the proportion of this individual year, or even period, is not a sufficient proof of it, being evidently caused by a smaller number of marriages taking place in the year, and not by a greater

greater number of births[a]. In the two years immediately ſucceeding the plague, when the exceſs of births above the deaths was ſo aſtoniſhing, the births bore a ſmall proportion to the marriages, and according to the uſual mode of calculating, it would have followed that each marriage yielded only 2.7 or 3.6 children. In the laſt period of the table, from 1752 to 1756, the births are to the marriages as 5 to 1, and in the individual year 1756, as 6.1 to 1; and yet during this period, the births are to the deaths, only as 148 to 100, which could not have been the caſe, if the high proportion of births to marriages had indicated a much greater number of births than uſual, inſtead of a ſmaller number of marriages.

The variations in the proportion of births to deaths, in the different periods of the 64 years included in the table, deſerve particular attention. If we were to take an average of the four years immediately ſucceeding the plague, the births would be to the deaths in the proportion of above 22 to 10, which ſuppoſing the mortality to be 1 in 36, would double the population in leſs than 21 years. If we take the 20 years from 1711 to 1731, the average propor-

[a] Suſſmilch, Gottliche Ordnung, vol. i. c. v. ſ. lxxxvi. p. 175.

tion of the births to deaths will appear to be about 17 to 10, a proportion which (according to Table I. page 29) would double the population in about 35 years. But if inſtead of 20 years we were to take the whole period of 64 years, the average proportion of births to deaths turns out to be but a little more than 12 to 10, a proportion which would not double the population in leſs than 125 years. If we were to include the mortality of the plague, or even of the epidemic years 1736 and 1737, in too ſhort a period, the deaths might exceed the births, and the population would appear to be decreaſing.

Suſſmilch thinks that inſtead of 1 in 36, the mortality in Pruſſia after the plague might be 1 in 38; and it may appear perhaps to ſome of my readers, that the plenty occaſioned by ſuch an event ought to make a ſtill greater difference. Dr. Short has particularly remarked that an extraordinary healthineſs generally ſucceeds any very great mortality[a]; and I have no doubt that the obſervation is juſt comparing ſimilar ages together. But under the moſt favourable circumſtances, infants under three years are more ſubject to death than at other ages; and the extraordinary proportion of children which

[a] Hiſtory of air, ſeaſons, &c. vol. ii. p. 344.

uſually

uſually follows a very great mortality counterbalances at firſt the natural healthineſs of the period, and prevents it from making much difference in the general mortality.

If we divide the population of Pruſſia after the plague by the number of deaths in the year 1711, it will appear that the mortality was nearly 1 in 31, and was therefore increaſed rather than diminiſhed, owing to the prodigious number of children born in that year. But this greater mortality would certainly ceaſe as ſoon as theſe children began to riſe into the firmer ſtages of life; and then probably Suſſmilch's obſervations would be juſt. In general however, we ſhall obſerve, that a great previous mortality produces a more ſenſible effect on the births than on the deaths. By referring to the table it will appear, that the number of annual deaths regularly increaſes with the increaſing population, and nearly keeps up the ſame relative proportion all the way through. But the number of annual births is not very different during the whole period, though, in this time, the population had more than doubled itſelf; and therefore the *proportion* of births to the whole population, at firſt, and at laſt, muſt have changed in an extraordinary degree.

It will appear therefore how liable we ſhould be to err in aſſuming a given proportion of births for the purpoſe of eſtimating the paſt population of any country. In the preſent inſtance it would have led to the concluſion, that the population was ſcarcely diminiſhed by the plague, although from the number of deaths it was known to be diminiſhed one third.

Variations of the ſame kind, though not in the ſame degree, appear in the proportions of births, deaths, and marriages, in all the tables which Suſſmilch has collected; and as writers on theſe ſubjects have been too apt to form calculations for paſt and future times from the proportions of a few years, it may be uſeful to draw the attention of the reader to a few more inſtances of ſuch variations.

In the churmark of Brandenburgh[a], during 15 years ending with 1712, the proportion of births to deaths was nearly 17 to 10. For 6 years ending with 1718, the proportion ſunk to 13 to 10; for 4 years ending with 1752, it was only 11 to 10, and for 4 years ending with 1756, 12 to 10. For 3 years ending with 1759, the deaths very greatly exceeded the births. The proportion of the births to the whole population is not given; but it is not probable

[a] Suſſmilch's Gottliche Ordnung, vol. i. Tables, p. 88.

that

that the great variations obſervable in the proportion of births to deaths ſhould have ariſen ſolely from the variations in the deaths. The proportion of births to marriages is tolerably uniform, the extremes being only 38 to 10, and 35 to 10, and the mean about 37 to 10. In this table no very great epidemics occur till the 3 years beginning with 1757, and beyond this period the liſts are not continued.

In the dukedom of Pomerania[a], the average proportion of births to deaths for 60 years from 1694 to 1756 both included, was 138 to 100; but in ſome of the periods of ſix years it was as high as 177 to 100, and 155 to 100. In others it ſunk as low as 124 to 100, and 130 to 100. The extremes of the proportions of births to marriages in the different periods of 5 and 6 years were 36 to 10, and 43 to 10, and the mean of the 60 years about 38 to 10. Epidemic years appear to have occurred occaſionally, in three of which the deaths exceeded the births; but this temporary diminution of population produced no correſponding diminution of births; and the two individual years which contain the greateſt proportion of marriages in the whole table occur, one the year after, and the other two years after epidemics.

[a] Suſſmilch, vol. i. tables, p. 91.

The

The exceſs of deaths however was not great till the 3 years ending with 1759, with which the table concludes.

In the neumark of Brandenburgh[a], for 60 years from 1695 to 1756 both included, the average proportion of births to deaths in the firſt 30 years was 148 to 100, in the laſt 30 years 127 to 100, in the whole 60 years 136 to 100. In ſome periods of 5 years it was as high as 171 and 167 to 100. In others as low as 118 and 128 to 100. For 5 years ending with 1726, the yearly average of births was 7012; for 5 years ending with 1746, it was 6927, from which, judging by the births, we might infer that the population had decreaſed in this interval of 20 years, but it appears from the average proportion of births and deaths during this period, that it muſt have conſiderably increaſed notwithſtanding the intervention of ſome epidemic years. The proportion of births to the whole population muſt therefore have decidedly changed. Another interval of 20 years in the ſame table gives a ſimilar reſult, both with regard to the births and the marriages. The extremes of the proportions of births to marriages are 34 to 10, and 42 to 10, and the mean about 38 to 10. The 3 years

[a] Suſſmilch's Gottliche Ordnung, vol. i. tables, p. 99.

beginning

beginning with 1757 were, as in the other tables, very fatal years.

In the dukedom of Magdeburgh [a] during 64 years ending with 1756, the average proportion of births to deaths was 123 to 100; in the firſt 28 years of the period 142 to 100, and in the laſt 34 years only 112 to 100; during one period of 5 years it was as high as 170 to 100, and in two periods the deaths exceeded the births. Slight epidemics appear to be interſperſed rather thickly throughout the table. In the two inſtances where three or four occur in ſucceſſive years, and diminiſh the population, they are followed by an increaſe of marriages and births. The extremes of the proportions of births to marriages are 42 to 10, and 34 to 10, and the mean of the 64 years 39 to 10. On this table Suſſmilch remarks, that though the average number of deaths ſhows an increaſed population of one third from 1715 or 1720, yet that the births and marriages would prove it to be ſtationary or even declining. In drawing this concluſion however, he adds the three epidemic years ending with 1759, during which both the marriages and births ſeem to have diminiſhed.

[a] Suſſmilch, vol. i. tables, p. 103.

In

In the principality of Halberſtadt[a], the average proportion of births to deaths for 68 years, ending with 1756, was 124 to 100; but in ſome periods of 5 years it was as high as 160 to 100, and in others as low as 110 to 100. The increaſe in the whole 68 years was conſiderable, and yet for 5 years ending with 1723, the average number of births was 2818, and for 4 years ending with 1750, 2628, from which it would appear that the population in 27 years had conſiderably diminiſhed. A ſimilar appearance occurs with regard to the marriages, during a period of 32 years. In the 5 years ending with 1718, they were 727; in the 5 years ending with 1750, 689. During both theſe periods the proportion of deaths would have ſhown a conſiderable increaſe. Epidemics ſeem to have occurred frequently, and in almoſt all the inſtances in which they were ſuch as for the deaths to exceed the births, they were immediately ſucceeded by a more than uſual proportion of marriages, and in a few years by an increaſed proportion of births. The greateſt number of marriages in the whole table occurs in the year 1751, after an epidemic in the year 1750, in

[a] Suſſmilch, vol. i. Tables, p. 108.

which

which the deaths had exceeded the births above one third, and the four or five following years contain the largeſt proportion of births. The extremes of the proportions of births to marriages are 42 to 10, and 34 to 10, the mean of the 68 years 38 to 10.

The remaining tables contain ſimilar reſults, but theſe will be ſufficient to ſhow the variations which are continually occurring in the proportions of the births and marriages as well as of the deaths, to the whole population.

It will be obſerved that the leaſt variable of the proportions is that which the births and marriages bear to each other, and the obvious reaſon is, that this proportion nearly expreſſes the prolifickneſs of marriages, which will not of courſe be ſubject to great changes. We can hardly indeed ſuppoſe that the prolifickneſs of marriages ſhould vary ſo much as the extremes which have been mentioned. Nor is it neceſſary that it ſhould, as another cauſe will contribute to produce the ſame effect. The births which are contemporary with the marriages of any particular year belong principally to marriages which had taken place ſome years before, and therefore if for four or five years a large pro-

proportion of marriages were to take place, and then accidentally for one or two years a small proportion, the effect would be a large proportion of births to marriages in the registers during these one or two years; and on the contrary, if for four or five years few marriages comparatively were to take place, and then for one or two years a great number, the effect would be a small proportion of births to marriages in the registers. This was strikingly illustrated in the table for Prussia and Lithuania, and would be confirmed by an inspection of all the other tables collected by Süssmilch, in which it appears that the extreme proportions of births to marriages are generally more affected by the number of marriages than the number of births, and consequently arise more from the variations in the disposition or encouragement to matrimony, than from the variations in the prolificness of marriages.

The common epidemical years that are interspersed throughout these tables will not of course have the same effects on the marriages and births, as the great plague in the table for Prussia; but in proportion to their magnitude, their operation will in general be found to be similar,

ſimilar. From the regiſters of many other countries, and particularly of towns, it appears that the viſitations of the plague were frequent at the latter end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries.

In contemplating the plagues and ſickly ſeaſons which occur in theſe tables, after a period of rapid increaſe, it is impoſſible not to be impreſſed with the idea that the number of inhabitants had, in theſe inſtances, exceeded the food and the accommodations neceſſary to preſerve them in health. The maſs of the people would, upon this ſuppoſition, be obliged to live worſe, and a greater number of them would be crowded together in one houſe; and theſe natural cauſes would evidently contribute to produce ſickneſs, even though the country, abſolutely conſidered, might not be crowded and populous. In a country, even thinly inhabited, if an increaſe of population take place before more food is raiſed, and more houſes are built, the inhabitants muſt be diſtreſſed for room and ſubſiſtence. If in the Highlands of Scotland, for the next ten or twelve years, the marriages were to be either more frequent or more prolific, and no emigration were to take place, inſtead

inſtead of five to a cottage, there might be ſeven, and this, added to the neceſſity of worſe living, would evidently have a moſt unfavourable effect on the health of the common people.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

General deductions from the preceding view of Society.

THAT the checks which have been mentioned are the immediate cauſes of the ſlow increaſe of population, and that theſe checks reſult principally from an inſufficiency of ſubſiſtence, will be evident from the comparatively rapid increaſe, which has invariably taken place whenever, by ſome ſudden enlargement in the means of ſubſiſtence, theſe checks have been in any conſiderable degree removed.

It has been univerſally remarked that all new colonies ſettled in healthy countries, where room and food were abundant, have conſtantly made a rapid progreſs in population. Many of the colonies from ancient Greece, in the courſe of one or two centuries, appear to have rivalled, and even ſurpaſſed, their mother cities. Syracuſe and Agrigentum in Sicily; Tarentum and Locri in Italy; Epheſus and Miletus in Leſſer Aſia; were, by all accounts, at leaſt equal to any of the cities of ancient Greece. All

theſe colonies had eſtabliſhed themſelves in countries inhabited by ſavage and barbarous nations, which eaſily gave place to the new ſettlers, who had of courſe plenty of good land. It is calculated that the Iſraelites, though they increaſed very ſlowly, while they were wandering in the land of Canaan, on ſettling in a fertile diſtrict of Egypt doubled their numbers every fifteen years during the whole period of their ſtay[a]. But not to dwell on remote inſtances, the European ſettlements in America bear ample teſtimony to the truth of a remark, that has never I believe been doubted. Plenty of rich land to be had for little or nothing is ſo powerful a cauſe of population as generally to overcome all obſtacles.

No ſettlements could eaſily have been worſe managed than thoſe of Spain in Mexico, Peru, and Quito. The tyranny, ſuperſtition, and vices of the mother country were introduced in ample quantities among her children. Exorbitant taxes were exacted by the crown; the moſt arbitrary reſtrictions were impoſed on their trade; and the governors were not behind hand in rapacity and extortion for themſelves as well as their

[a] Short's New Obſerv. on Bills of Mortality, p. 259, 8vo. 1750.

maſter.

maſter. Yet under all theſe difficulties, the colonies made a quick progreſs in population. The city of Quito which was but a hamlet of Indians, is repreſented by Ulloa as containing fifty or ſixty thouſand inhabitants above fifty years ago[a]. Lima, which was founded ſince the conqueſt, is mentioned by the ſame author as equally or more populous, before the fatal earthquake in 1746. Mexico is ſaid to contain a hundred thouſand inhabitants, which, notwithſtanding the exaggerations of the Spaniſh writers, is ſuppoſed to be five times greater than what it contained in the time of Montezuma[b].

In the Portugueſe colony of Brazil, governed with almoſt equal tyranny, there were ſuppoſed to be above thirty years ago ſix hundred thouſand inhabitants of European extraction[c].

The Dutch and French colonies, though under the government of excluſive companies of merchants, which, as Dr. Smith juſtly obſerves, is the worſt of all poſſible governments, ſtill perſiſted in thriving under every diſadvantage[d].

But the Engliſh North American colonies, now the powerful people of the United States of Ame-

[a] Voy. d'Ulloa, tom. i. liv. v. ch. v. p. 229. 4to. 1752.
[b] Smith's Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. ch. vii. p. 363.
[c] Id. p. 365. [d] Id. p. 368, 369.

rica, far outſtripped all the others, in the progreſs of their population. To the quantity of rich land which they poſſeſſed in common with the Spaniſh and Portugueſe colonies, they added a greater degree of liberty and equality. Though not without ſome reſtrictions on their foreign commerce, they were allowed the liberty of managing their own internal affairs. The political inſtitutions which prevailed were favourable to the alienation and diviſion of property. Lands which were not cultivated by the proprietor within a limited time were declared grantable to any other perſon. In Pennſylvania, there was no right of primogeniture; and in the provinces of New England, the eldeſt ſon had only a double ſhare. There were no tithes in any of the States, and ſcarcely any taxes. And on account of the extreme cheapneſs of good land, a capital could not be more advantageouſly employed than in agriculture, which at the ſame time that it affords the greateſt quantity of healthy work ſupplies the moſt valuable produce to the ſociety.

The conſequence of theſe favourable circumſtances united was a rapidity of increaſe almoſt without parallel in hiſtory. Throughout all the northern provinces the population was found

to

to double itſelf in 25 years. The original number of perſons which had ſettled in the four provinces of New England in 1643 was 21,200. Afterwards it was calculated that more left them than went to them. In the year 1760 they were increaſed to half a million. They had therefore, all along, doubled their number in 25 years. In New Jerſey, the period of doubling appeared to be 22 years; and in Rhode Iſland ſtill leſs. In the back ſettlements, where the inhabitants applied themſelves ſolely to agriculture, and luxury was not known, they were ſuppoſed to double their number in fifteen years. Along the ſeacoaſt, which would naturally be firſt inhabited, the period of doubling was about 35 years, and in ſome of the maritime towns the population was abſolutely at a ſtand[a]. From the

[a] Price's Obſerv. on Reverſ. Paym. vol. i. p. 282, 283, and vol. ii. p. 260. I have lately had an opportunity of ſeeing ſome extracts from the ſermon of Dr. Styles, from which Dr. Price has taken theſe facts. Speaking of Rhode Iſland, Dr. Styles ſays, that though the period of doubling for the whole colony is 25 years, yet that it is different in different parts, and within land is 20 and 15 years. The population of the five towns of Glouceſter, Situate, Coventry, Weſtgreenwich, and Exeter, was 5033, A. D. 1748, and 6986, A. D. 1755; which implies a period of doubling of 15 years only. He mentions

the late cenſus made in America it appears, that taking all the States together, they have ſtill continued to double their numbers every 25 years; and as the whole population is now ſo great as not to be materially affected by the emigrations from Europe, and as it is known, that in ſome of the towns and diſtricts near the

afterwards that the county of Kent doubles in 20 years; and the county of Providence in 18 years.

I have alſo lately ſeen a paper of *Facts and calculations reſpecting the population of the United States*, which makes the period of doubling for the whole of the States, ſince their firſt ſettlement, only 20 years. I know not of what authority this paper is; but far as it goes upon public facts and enumerations I ſhould think, that it muſt be to be depended on. One period is very ſtriking. From a return to Congreſs in 1782, the population appeared to be 2,389,300, and in the cenſus of 1790, 4,000,000: increaſe in 9 years, 1,610,700; from which deduct ten thouſand per annum for European ſettlers, which will be 90,000; and allow for their increaſe at 5 per cent. for 4½ years, which will be 20,250: the remaining increaſe during thoſe 9 years, from procreation only, will be 1,500,450, which is very nearly 7 per cent; and conſequently the period of doubling at this rate would be leſs than 16 years.

If this calculation for the whole population of the States be in any degree near the truth, it cannot be doubted, that in particular diſtricts the period of doubling from procreation only has often been leſs than 15 years. The period immediately ſucceeding the war was likely to be a period of very rapid increaſe.

ſea-

ſeacoaſt, the progreſs of population has been comparatively ſlow; it is evident that, in the interior of the country in general, the period of doubling from procreation only muſt have been conſiderably leſs than 25 years.

The population of the United States of America, according to the late cenſus, is 5,172,312[a]. We have no reaſon to believe that Great Britain is leſs populous at preſent, for the emigration of the ſmall parent ſtock which produced theſe numbers. On the contrary, a certain degree of emigration is known to be favourable to the population of the mother country. It has been particularly remarked that the two Spaniſh provinces, from which the greateſt number of people emigrated to America, became in conſequence more populous.

Whatever was the original number of Britiſh emigrants which increaſed ſo faſt in North America; let us aſk, Why does not an equal number produce an equal increaſe in the ſame time in Great Britain? The obvious reaſon to

[a] One ſmall State is mentioned as being omitted in the cenſus; and I underſtand that the population is generally conſidered at above this number. It is ſaid to approach towards 6,000,000. But ſuch vague opinions cannot of courſe be much relied on.

be aſſigned is the want of food; and that this want is the moſt efficient cauſe of the three immediate checks to population, which have been obſerved to prevail in all ſocieties, is evident, from the rapidity with which even old ſtates recover the deſolations of war, peſtilence, famine, and the convulſions of nature. They are then for a ſhort time placed a little in the ſituation of new colonies, and the effect is always anſwerable to what might be expected. If the induſtry of the inhabitants be not deſtroyed, ſubſiſtence will ſoon increaſe beyond the wants of the reduced numbers; and the invariable conſequence will be, that population, which before perhaps was nearly ſtationary, will begin immediately to increaſe, and will continue its progreſs till the former population is recovered.

The fertile province of Flanders, which has been ſo often the ſeat of the moſt deſtructive wars, after a reſpite of a few years, has always appeared as rich and as populous as ever. The undiminiſhed population of France, which has before been noticed, is an inſtance very ſtrongly in point. The tables of Suſſmilch afford continual proofs of a very rapid increaſe after great mortalities; and the table for Pruſſia and Lithuania,

thuania, which I have inſerted[a], is particularly ſtriking in this reſpect. The effects of the dreadful plague in London, in 1666, were not perceptible 15 or 20 years afterwards. It may even be doubted whether Turkey and Egypt are upon an average much leſs populous for the plagues which periodically lay them waſte. If the number of people which they contain be conſiderably leſs now than formerly, it is rather to be attributed to the tyranny and oppreſſion of the governments under which they groan, and the conſequent diſcouragements to agriculture, than to the loſſes which they ſuſtain by the plague. The traces of the moſt deſtructive famines in China, Indoſtan, Egypt, and other countries, are by all accounts very ſoon obliterated; and the moſt tremendous convulſions of nature, ſuch as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, if they do not happen ſo frequently as to drive away the inhabitants, or deſtroy their ſpirit of induſtry, have been found to produce but a trifling effect on the average population of any ſtate.

It has appeared from the regiſters of different countries which have already been produced, that the progreſs of their population is checked

[a] See p. 32 of this vol.

by

by the periodical, though irregular, returns of plagues and ſickly ſeaſons. Dr. Short, in his curious reſearches into bills of mortality, often uſes the expreſſion of "terrible correctives of the "redundance of mankind[a];" and in a table of all the plagues, peſtilences, and famines, of which he could collect accounts, ſhows the conſtancy and univerſality of their operation.

The epidemical years in his table, or the years in which the plague or ſome great and waſting epidemic prevailed, for ſmaller ſickly ſeaſons ſeem not to be included, are 431[b], of which 32 were before the Chriſtian æra[c]. If we divide therefore the years of the preſent æra by 399, it will appear that the periodical returns of ſuch epidemics, to ſome country that we are acquainted with, have been on an average only at the interval of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ years.

Of the 254 great famines and dearths enumerated in the table, 15 were before the Chriſtian æra[d], beginning with that which occurred in Paleſtine, in the time of Abraham. If ſubtracting theſe 15 we divide the years of the preſent æra by the remainder, it will appear that

[a] New Obſerv. on Bills of Mortality, p 96.
[b] Hiſt. of Air, Seaſons, &c. vol. ii. p. 366.
[c] Id. vol. ii. p. 202. [d] Id. vol. ii. p. 206.

the

the average interval between the viſits of this dreadful ſcourge has been only about 7 ½ years.

How far theſe "terrible correctives to the "redundance of mankind" have been occaſioned by the too rapid increaſe of population, is a point which it would be very difficult to determine with any degree of preciſion. The cauſes of moſt of our diſeaſes appear to us to be ſo myſterious, and probably are really ſo various, that it would be raſhneſs to lay too much ſtreſs on any ſingle one; but it will not perhaps be too much to ſay, that *among* theſe cauſes we ought certainly to rank crowded houſes, and inſufficient or unwholeſome food, which are the natural conſequences of an increaſe of population faſter than the accommodations of a country with reſpect to habitations and food will allow.

Almoſt all the hiſtories of epidemics which we have tend to confirm this ſuppoſition, by deſcribing them in general as making their principal ravages among the lower claſſes of people. In Dr. Short's tables this circumſtance is frequently mentioned[a]; and it further appears that a very conſiderable proportion of the epidemic years either followed or were accompanied by ſeaſons

[a] Hiſt. of Air, Seaſons, &c. vol. ii. p. 206. et ſeq.

of

of dearth and bad food[a]. In other places he alſo mentions great plagues as diminiſhing particularly the numbers of the lower or ſervile ſort of people[b]; and in ſpeaking of different diſeaſes he obſerves, that thoſe which are occaſioned by bad and unwholeſome food generally laſt the longeſt[c].

We know from conſtant experience, that fevers are generated in our jails, our manufactories, our crowded workhouſes, and in the narrow and cloſe ſtreets of our large towns; all which ſituations appear to be ſimilar in their effects to ſqualid poverty: and we cannot doubt that cauſes of this kind, aggravated in degree, contributed to the production and prevalence of thoſe great and waſting plagues formerly ſo common in Europe, but which now, from the mitigation of theſe cauſes, are every where conſiderably abated, and in many places appear to be completely extirpated.

Of the other great ſcourge of mankind, famine, it may be obſerved, that it is not in the nature of things that the increaſe of population ſhould abſolutely produce one. This increaſe, though rapid, is neceſſarily gradual; and as the

[a] Hiſt. of Air, Seaſons, &c. vol. ii. p. 206, et ſeq. and 336.
[b] New Obſerv. p. 125. [c] Id. p. 108.

human

human frame cannot be ſupported, even for a very ſhort time without food, it is evident that no more human beings can grow up than there is proviſion to maintain. But though the principle of population cannot abſolutely produce a famine, it prepares the way for one in the moſt complete manner; and by obliging all the lower claſſes of people to ſubſiſt nearly on the ſmalleſt quantity of food that will ſupport life, turns even a ſlight deficiency from the failure of the ſeaſons into a ſevere dearth; and may be fairly ſaid therefore, to be one of the principal cauſes of famine. Among the ſigns of an approaching dearth, Dr. Short mentions one or more years of luxuriant crops together[a]; and this obſervation is probably juſt, as we know that the general effect of years of cheapneſs and abundance is to diſpoſe a greater number of perſons to marry, and under ſuch circumſtances the return to a year merely of an average crop might produce a ſcarcity.

The ſmall-pox which at preſent may be conſidered as the moſt prevalent and fatal epidemic in Europe, is of all others, perhaps, the moſt difficult to account for, though the periods

[a] Hiſt. of Air, Seaſons, &c. vol. ii. p. 367.

of

of its return are in many places regular*. Dr. Short obſerves, that from the hiſtories of this diſorder it ſeems to have very little dependence upon the paſt or preſent conſtitution of the weather or ſeaſons, and that it appears epidemically at all times, and in all ſtates of the air, though not ſo frequently in a hard froſt. We know of no inſtances, I believe, of its being clearly generated under any circumſtances of ſituation. I do not mean therefore to inſinuate that poverty and crowded houſes ever abſolutely produced it; but I may be allowed to remark, that in thoſe places where its returns are regular, and its ravages among children, particularly among thoſe of the lower claſs, are conſiderable, it neceſſarily follows that theſe circumſtances, in a greater degree than uſual, muſt always precede and accompany its appearance; that is, from the time of its laſt viſit, the average number of children will be increaſing, the people will, in conſequence, be growing poorer, and the houſes will be more crowded till another viſit removes this ſuperabundant population.

In all theſe caſes, how little ſoever force we may be diſpoſed to attribute to the effects of the principle of population in the actual pro-

* Hiſt. of Air, Seaſons, &c. vol. ii. p. 411.

duction

duction of diſorders, we cannot avoid allowing their force as prediſpoſing cauſes to the reception of contagion, and as giving very great additional force to the extenſiveneſs and fatality of its ravages.

It is obſerved by Dr. Short that a ſevere mortal epidemic is generally ſucceeded by an uncommon healthineſs, from the late diſtemper having carried off moſt of the declining worn-out conſtitutions[a]. It is probable, alſo, that another cauſe of it may be the greater plenty of room and food, and the conſequently meliorated condition of the lower claſſes of the people. Sometimes, according to Dr. Short, a very fruitful year is followed by a very mortal and ſickly one, and mortal ones often ſucceeded by very fruitful, as though Nature ſought either to prevent or quickly repair the loſs by death. In general the next year after ſickly and mortal ones is prolific in proportion to the breeders left[b].

This laſt effect we have ſeen moſt ſtrikingly exemplified in the table for Pruſſia and Lithuania[c]. And from this and other tables of Suſſmilch it alſo appears, that when the increaſing produce of a country, and the increaſing de-

[a] Hiſt. of Air, Seaſons, &c. vol. ii. p. 344.

[b] New Obſerv. p. 191. [c] p. 32 of this vol.

mand for labour, ſo far meliorate the condition of the labourer, as greatly to encourage marriage, the cuſtom of early marriages is generally continued till the population has gone beyond the increaſed produce, and ſickly ſeaſons appear to be the natural and neceſſary conſequence. The continental regiſters exhibit many inſtances of rapid increaſe, interrupted in this manner by mortal diſeaſes, and the inference ſeems to be, that thoſe countries where ſubſiſtence is increaſing ſufficiently to encourage population, but not to anſwer all its demands, will be more ſubject to periodical epidemics than thoſe where the increaſe of population is more nearly accommodated to the average produce.

The converſe of this will of courſe be true. In thoſe countries which are ſubject to periodical ſickneſſes, the increaſe of population, or the exceſs of births above the deaths will be greater in the intervals of theſe periods than is uſual in countries not ſo much ſubject to theſe diſeaſes. If Turkey and Egypt have been nearly ſtationary in their average population for the laſt century, in the intervals of their periodical plagues, the births muſt have exceeded the deaths in a much greater proportion than in ſuch countries as France and England.

It

It is for theſe reaſons that no eſtimates of future population or depopulation, formed from any exiſting rate of increaſe or decreaſe, can be depended upon. Sir William Petty calculated that in the year 1800 the city of London would contain 5,359,000[a] inhabitants, inſtead of which it does not now contain a fifth part of that number. And Mr. Eton has lately propheſied the extinction of the population of the Turkiſh empire in another century[b]; an event which will, as certainly, fail of taking place. If America were to continue increaſing at the ſame rate as at preſent, for the next 150 years, her population would exceed the population of China; but though prophecies are dangerous I will venture to ſay, that ſuch an increaſe will not take place in that time, though it may perhaps in five or ſix hundred years.

Europe was, without doubt, formerly more ſubject to plagues and waſting epidemics than at preſent, and this will account, in great meaſure, for the greater proportion of births to deaths in former times, mentioned by many authors, as it has always been a common practice to eſtimate theſe proportions from too ſhort

[a] Political Arithmetic, p. 17.

[b] Survey of the Turkiſh Empire, c. vii. p. 281.

periods, and generally to reject the years of plague as accidental.

The higheſt average proportion of births to deaths in England may be conſidered as about 12 to 10, or 120 to 100. The proportion in France for ten years, ending in 1780, was about 115 to 100[a]. Though theſe proportions have undoubtedly varied at different periods during the laſt century, yet we have reaſon to think that they have not varied in any very conſiderable degree; and it will appear therefore, that the population of France and England has accommodated itſelf more nearly to the average produce of each country than many other ſtates. The operation of the preventive check, wars, the ſilent though certain deſtruction of life in large towns and manufactories, and the cloſe habitations and inſufficient food of many of the poor, prevent population from outrunning the means of ſubſiſtence; and if I may uſe an expreſſion, which certainly at firſt appears ſtrange, ſuperſede the neceſſity of great and ravaging epidemics to deſtroy what is redundant. If a waſting plague were to ſweep off two millions in England, and ſix millions in France, it cannot be doubted that

[a] Necker de l'Adminiſtration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 255.

after

after the inhabitants had recovered from the dreadful ſhock, the proportion of births to deaths would riſe much above the uſual average in either country during the laſt century[a].

In New Jerſey the proportion of births to deaths, on an average of 7 years, ending 1743, was 300 to 100. In France and England the higheſt average proportion cannot be reckoned at more than 120 to 100. Great and aſtoniſhing as this difference is we ought not to be ſo wonder-ſtruck at it, as to attribute it to the miraculous interpoſition of Heaven. The cauſes of it are not remote, latent, and myſterious, but near us, round about us, and open to the inveſtigation of every inquiring mind. It accords with the moſt liberal ſpirit of philoſophy to believe, that not a ſtone can fall or plant riſe without the immediate agency of divine power. But we know from experience, that theſe operations of what we call nature have been conducted almoſt invariably according to fixed laws. And ſince the world began the cauſes of population and depopulation have been probably

[a] This remark has been, to a certain degree, verified of late in France, by the increaſe of births which has taken place ſince the revolution.

as conſtant as any of the laws of nature with which we are acquainted.

The paſſion between the ſexes has appeared in every age to be ſo nearly the ſame, that it may always be conſidered, in algebraic language, as a given quantity. The great law of neceſſity which prevents population from increaſing in any country beyond the food which it can either produce or acquire, is a law ſo open to our view, ſo obvious and evident to our underſtandings that we cannot for a moment doubt it. The different modes which nature takes to repreſs a redundant population, do not appear indeed to us ſo certain and regular; but though we cannot always predict the mode we may with certainty predict the fact. If the proportion of the births to the deaths for a few years indicates an increaſe of numbers much beyond the proportional increaſed or acquired food of the country, we may be perfectly certain, that unleſs an emigration take place the deaths will ſhortly exceed the births, and that the increaſe that had been obſerved for a few years cannot be the real average increaſe of the population of the country. If there were no other depopulating cauſes, and if the preventive check did not

not operate very ſtrongly, every country would, without doubt be ſubject to periodical plagues and famines.

The only true criterion of a real and permanent increaſe in the population of any country is the increaſe of the means of ſubſiſtence. But even this criterion is ſubject to ſome ſlight variations, which however are completely open to our obſervation. In ſome countries population ſeems to have been forced; that is, the people have been habituated by degrees to live almoſt upon the ſmalleſt poſſible quantity of food. There muſt have been periods in ſuch countries when population increaſed permanently without an increaſe in the means of ſubſiſtence. China, India, and the countries poſſeſſed by the Bedoween Arabs, as we have ſeen in the former part of this work, appear to anſwer to this deſcription. The average produce of theſe countries ſeems to be but barely ſufficient to ſupport the lives of the inhabitants, and of courſe any deficiency from the badneſs of the ſeaſons muſt be fatal. Nations in this ſtate muſt neceſſarily be ſubject to famines.

In America, where the reward of labour is at preſent ſo liberal, the lower claſſes might retrench very conſiderably in a year of ſcarcity,

without materially diſtreſſing themſelves. A famine therefore, ſeems to be almoſt impoſſible. It may be expected that in the progreſs of the population of America the labourers will in time be much leſs liberally rewarded. The numbers will in this caſe permanently increaſe without a proportional increaſe in the means of ſubſiſtence.

In the different countries of Europe there muſt be ſome variations in the proportion of the number of inhabitants and the quantity of food conſumed, ariſing from the different habits of living which prevail in each ſtate. The labourers of the ſouth of England are ſo accuſtomed to eat fine wheaten bread, that they will ſuffer themſelves to be half-ſtarved before they will ſubmit to live like the Scotch peaſants.

They might perhaps, in time, by the conſtant operation of the hard law of neceſſity, be reduced to live even like the lower claſſes of the Chineſe, and the country would then with the ſame quantity of food ſupport a greater population. But to effect this muſt always be a difficult, and every friend to humanity will hope, an abortive attempt.

I have mentioned ſome caſes where population may permanently increaſe, without a pro-

portional increaſe in the means of ſubſiſtence. But it is evident, that the variation in different ſtates between the food and the numbers ſupported by it is reſtricted to a limit, beyond which it cannot paſs. In every country the population of which is not abſolutely decreaſing, the food muſt be neceſſarily ſufficient to ſupport and to continue the race of labourers.

Other circumſtances being the ſame it may be affirmed, that countries are populous according to the quantity of human food which they produce, or can acquire; and happy, according to the liberality with which this food is divided, or the quantity which a day's labour will purchaſe. Corn countries are more populous than paſture countries; and rice countries more populous than corn countries. But their happineſs does not depend either upon their being thinly or fully inhabited, upon their poverty or their riches, their youth or their age; but on the proportion which the population and the food bear to each other. This proportion is generally the moſt favourable in new colonies, where the knowledge and induſtry of an old ſtate operate on the fertile unappropriated land of a new one. In other caſes the youth or the age of a ſtate is not, in this reſpect, of great

importance. It is probable that the food of Great Britain is divided in more liberal ſhares to her inhabitants at the preſent period, than it was two thouſand, three thouſand, or four thouſand years ago. And it has appeared that the poor and thinly-inhabited tracts of the Scotch Highlands are more diſtreſſed by a redundant population than the moſt populous parts of Europe.

If a country were never to be overrun by a people more advanced in arts, but left to its own natural progreſs in civilization; from the time that its produce might be conſidered as a unit, to the time that it might be conſidered as a million, during the lapſe of many thouſand years, there would not be a ſingle period when the maſs of the people could be ſaid to be free from diſtreſs, either directly or indirectly, for want of food. In every ſtate in Europe, ſince we have firſt had accounts of it, millions and millions of human exiſtences have been repreſſed from this ſimple cauſe, though perhaps in ſome of theſe ſtates an abſolute famine may never have been known.

Famine ſeems to be the laſt, the moſt dreadful reſource of nature. The power of population is ſo ſuperior to the power in the earth to produce

produce ſubſiſtence for man, that unleſs arreſted by the preventive check, premature death muſt in ſome ſhape or other viſit the human race. The vices of mankind are active and able miniſters of depopulation. They are the precurſors in the great army of deſtruction, and often finiſh the dreadful work themſelves. But ſhould they fail in this war of extermination, ſickly ſeaſons, epidemics, peſtilence, and plague, advance in terrific array, and ſweep off their thouſands and ten thouſands. Should ſucceſs be ſtill incomplete, gigantic inevitable famine ſtalks in the rear, and at one mighty blow levels the population with the food of the world.

Muſt it not then be acknowledged, by an attentive examiner of the hiſtories of mankind, that, in every age and in every ſtate in which man has exiſted or does now exiſt,

The increaſe of population is neceſſarily limited by the means of ſubſiſtence:

Population invariably increaſes when the means of ſubſiſtence increaſe, unleſs prevented by powerful and obvious checks:

Theſe checks, and the checks which keep the population down to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence, are moral reſtraint, vice, and miſery:

In

In comparing the ſtate of ſociety which has been conſidered in this ſecond book with that which formed the ſubject of the firſt, I think it appears that in modern Europe the poſitive checks to population prevail leſs, and the preventive checks more than in paſt times, and in the more uncivilized parts of the world.

War, the predominant check to the population of ſavage nations, has certainly abated, even including the late unhappy revolutionary conteſts; and ſince the prevalence of a greater degree of perſonal cleanlineſs, of better modes of clearing and building towns, and of a more equable diſtribution of the products of the ſoil from improving knowledge in political economy, plagues, violent diſeaſes, and famines, have been certainly mitigated, and have become leſs frequent.

With regard to the preventive check to population, though it muſt be acknowledged, that that branch of it which comes under the head of moral reſtraint[a] does not at preſent prevail much among the male part of ſociety; yet I am ſtrongly diſpoſed to believe, that it prevails more than in thoſe ſtates which were firſt con-

[a] The reader will recollect the confined ſenſe in which I take this term.

ſidered;

ſidered; and it can ſcarcely be doubted, that in modern Europe a much larger proportion of women paſs a conſiderable part of their lives in the exerciſe of this virtue, than in paſt times and among uncivilized nations. But however this may be, if we conſider only the general term which implies principally an infrequency of the marriage union from the fear of a family, without reference to conſequences, it may be conſidered in this light as the moſt powerful of the checks, which in modern Europe keep down the population to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence.

ESSAY, &c.

BOOK III.

OF THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OR EXPEDIENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN PROPOSED OR HAVE PREVAILED IN SOCIETY, AS THEY AFFECT THE EVILS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

CHAP. I.

Of Syſtems of Equality. Wallace. Condorcet.

To a perſon who views the paſt and preſent ſtates of mankind in the light in which they have appeared in the two preceding books, it cannot but be a matter of aſtoniſhment that all the writers on the perfectibility of man and of ſociety, who have noticed the argument of the principle of population, treat it always very ſlightly, and invariably repreſent the difficulties ariſing

ariſing from it as at a great and almoſt immeaſurable diſtance. Even Mr. Wallace, who thought the argument itſelf of ſo much weight as to deſtroy his whole ſyſtem of equality, did not ſeem to be aware that any difficulty would ariſe from this cauſe till the whole earth had been cultivated like a garden, and was incapable of any further increaſe of produce. Were this really the caſe, and were a beautiful ſyſtem of equality in other reſpects practicable, I cannot think that our ardour in the purſuit of ſuch a ſcheme ought to be damped by the contemplation of ſo remote a difficulty. An event at ſuch a diſtance might fairly be left to providence. But the truth is, that if the view of the argument given in this eſſay be juſt, the difficulty, ſo far from being remote, would be imminent and immediate. At every period during the progreſs of cultivation, from the preſent moment to the time when the whole earth was become like a garden, the diſtreſs for want of food would be conſtantly preſſing on all mankind if they were equal. Though the produce of the earth would be increaſing every year, population would be tending to increaſe much faſter, and the redundancy muſt neceſſarily be checked by

by the periodical or conſtant action of moral reſtraint, vice, or miſery.

M. Condorcet's *Eſquiſſe d'un tableau hiſtorique des progrès de l'eſprit humain* was written, it is ſaid, under the preſſure of that cruel proſcription which terminated in his death. If he had no hopes of its being ſeen during his life, and of its intereſting France in his favour, it is a ſingular inſtance of the attachment of a man to principles, which every day's experience was ſo fatally for himſelf contradicting. To ſee the human mind, in one of the moſt enlightened nations of the world, debaſed by ſuch a fermentation of diſguſting paſſions, of fear, cruelty, malice, revenge, ambition, madneſs, and folly, as would have diſgraced the moſt ſavage nations in the moſt barbarous age, muſt have been ſuch a tremendous ſhock to his ideas of the neceſſary and inevitable progreſs of the human mind, as nothing but the firmeſt conviction of the truth of his principles, in ſpite of all appearances, could have withſtood.

This poſthumous publication is only a ſketch of a much larger work which he propoſed ſhould be executed. It neceſſarily wants therefore that detail and application, which can alone prove the truth of any theory. A few obſervations

obſervations will be ſufficient to ſhow how completely this theory is contradicted, when it is applied to the real and not to an imaginary ſtate of things.

In the laſt diviſion of the work, which treats of the future progreſs of man towards perfection, M. Condorcet ſays, that comparing in the different civilized nations of Europe the actual population with the extent of territory; and obſerving their cultivation, their induſtry, their diviſions of labour, and their means of ſubſiſtence, we ſhall ſee that it would be impoſſible to preſerve the ſame means of ſubſiſtence, and conſequently the ſame population, without a number of individuals who have no other means of ſupplying their wants than their induſtry.

Having allowed the neceſſity of ſuch a claſs of men, and adverting afterwards to the precarious revenue of thoſe families that would depend ſo entirely on the life and health of their chief[a], he ſays very juſtly, "There exiſts then a "neceſſary cauſe of inequality, of dependence, "and even of miſery, which menaces without

[a] To ſave time and long quotations, I ſhall here give the ſubſtance of ſome of M. Condorcet's ſentiments, and I hope that I ſhall not miſrepreſent them; but I refer the reader to the work itſelf, which will amuſe if it do not convince him.

ceaſing

" ceaſing, the moſt numerous and active claſs " of our ſocieties." The difficulty is juſt and well ſtated; but his mode of removing it will, I fear, be found totally inefficacious.

By the application of calculations to the probabilities of life, and the intereſt of money, he propoſes that a fund ſhould be eſtabliſhed, which ſhould aſſure to the old an aſſiſtance produced in part by their own former ſavings, and in part by the ſavings of individuals, who in making the ſame ſacrifice die before they reap the benefit of it. The ſame or a ſimilar fund ſhould give aſſiſtance to women and children who loſe their huſbands or fathers; and afford a capital to thoſe who were of an age to found a new family, ſufficient for the development of their induſtry. Theſe eſtabliſhments, he obſerves, might be made in the name and under the protection of the ſociety. Going ſtill further, he ſays, that by the juſt application of calculations, means might be found of more completely preſerving a ſtate of equality, by preventing credit from being the excluſive privilege of great fortunes, and yet giving it a baſis equally ſolid, and by rendering the progreſs of induſtry and the activity of commerce leſs dependent on great capitaliſts.

Such eſtabliſhments and calculations may ap-

pear very promiſing upon paper; but when applied to real life they will be found to be abſolutely nugatory. M. Condorcet allows that a claſs of people which maintains itſelf entirely by induſtry is neceſſary to every ſtate. Why does he allow this? No other reaſon can well be aſſigned, than becauſe he conceives that the labour neceſſary to procure ſubſiſtence for an extended population will not be performed without the goad of neceſſity. If by eſtabliſhments upon the plans that have been mentioned, this ſpur to induſtry be removed; if the idle and negligent be placed upon the ſame footing with regard to their credit, and the future ſupport of their wives and families, as the active and induſtrious, can we expect to ſee men exert that animated activity in bettering their condition, which now forms the maſter-ſpring of public proſperity? If an inquiſition were to be eſtabliſhed to examine the claims of each individual, and to determine whether he had or had not exerted himſelf to the utmoſt, and to grant or refuſe aſſiſtance accordingly, this would be little elſe than a repetition upon a larger ſcale of the Engliſh poor laws, and would be completely deſtructive of the true principles of liberty and equality.

But

But independently of this great objection to theſe eſtabliſhments, and ſuppoſing for a moment that they would give no check to production, the greateſt difficulty remains yet behind.

Were every man ſure of a comfortable proviſion for a family, almoſt every man would have one; and were the riſing generation free from the "killing froſt" of miſery, population muſt increaſe with unuſual rapidity. Of this M. Condorcet ſeems to be fully aware himſelf; and after having deſcribed further improvements he ſays,

"But in this progreſs of induſtry and happi-
"neſs, each generation will be called to more
"extended enjoyments, and in conſequence,
"by the phyſical conſtitution of the human
"frame, to an increaſe in the number of indi-
"viduals. Muſt not there arrive a period then
"when theſe laws equally neceſſary ſhall coun-
"teract each other; when the increaſe of the
"number of men ſurpaſſing their means of ſub-
"ſiſtence, the neceſſary reſult muſt be, either
"a continual diminution of happineſs and po-
"pulation—a movement truly retrograde; or
"at leaſt a kind of oſcillation between good and
"evil? In ſocieties arrived at this term will not
"this oſcillation be a conſtantly ſubſiſting cauſe

" of periodical miſery? Will it not mark the " limit when all further melioration will be- " come impoſſible, and point out that term to " the perfectibility of the human race, which " it may reach in the courſe of ages, but can " never paſs?" He then adds,

" There is no perſon who does not ſee how " very diſtant ſuch a period is from us. But " ſhall we ever arrive at it? It is equally im- " poſſible to pronounce for or againſt the fu- " ture realization of an event, which cannot " take place but at an æra when the human " race will have attained improvements of which " we can at preſent ſcarcely form a conception."

M. Condorcet's picture of what may be expected to happen when the number of men ſhall ſurpaſs their means of ſubſiſtence is juſtly drawn. The oſcillation which he deſcribes will certainly take place, and will without doubt be a conſtantly ſubſiſting cauſe of periodical miſery. The only point in which I differ from M. Condorcet in this deſcription is, with regard to the period when it may be applied to the human race. M. Condorcet thinks that it cannot poſſibly be applicable, but at an æra extremely diſtant. If the proportion between the natural increaſe of population and food, which was

ſtated in the beginning of this eſſay, and which has received conſiderable confirmation from the poverty that has been found to prevail in every ſtage and department of human ſociety, be in any degree near the truth, it will appear on the contrary that the period when the number of men ſurpaſſes their means of ſubſiſtence has long ſince arrived; and that this neceſſary oſcillation, this conſtantly ſubſiſting cauſe of periodical miſery, has exiſted ever ſince we have had any hiſtories of mankind, and continues to exiſt at the preſent moment.

M. Condorcet however goes on to ſay, that ſhould the period which he conceives to be ſo diſtant ever arrive, the human race, and the advocates of the perfectibility of man, need not be alarmed at it. He then proceeds to remove the difficulty in a manner which I profeſs not to underſtand. Having obſerved that the ridiculous prejudices of ſuperſtition would by that time have ceaſed to throw over morals a corrupt and degrading auſterity, he alludes either to a promiſcuous concubinage which would prevent breeding, or to ſomething elſe as unnatural. To remove the difficulty in this way will ſurely, in the opinion of moſt men, be to deſtroy that virtue and purity of manners which

the advocates of equality, and of the perfectibility of man, profeſs to be the end and object of their views.

The laſt queſtion which M. Condorcet propoſes for examination is, the organic perfectibility of man. He obſerves, that if the proofs which have been already given, and which, in their development, will receive greater force in the work itſelf, are ſufficient to eſtabliſh the indefinite perfectibility of man, upon the ſuppoſition of the ſame natural faculties and the ſame organization which he has at preſent; what will be the certainty, what the extent of our hopes, if this organization, theſe natural faculties themſelves, be ſuſceptible of melioration?

From the improvement of medicine; from the uſe of more wholeſome food and habitations; from a manner of living, which will improve the ſtrength of the body by exerciſe without impairing it by exceſs; from the deſtruction of the two great cauſes of the degradation of man, miſery, and too great riches; from the gradual removal of tranſmiſſible and contagious diſorders by the improvement of phyſical knowledge, rendered more efficacious by the progreſs of reaſon and of ſocial order; he infers, that though man will not abſolutely become immortal, yet that the

the duration between his birth and natural death will increaſe without ceaſing, will have no aſſignable term, and may properly be expreſſed by the word indefinite. He then defines this word to mean either a conſtant approach to an unlimited extent without ever reaching it; or an increaſe in the immenſity of ages to an extent greater than any aſſignable quantity.

But ſurely the application of this term in either of theſe ſenſes to the duration of human life is in the higheſt degree unphiloſophical, and totally unwarranted by any appearances in the laws of nature. Variations from different cauſes are eſſentially diſtinct from a regular and unretrograde increaſe. The average duration of human life will to a certain degree vary from healthy or unhealthy climates, from wholeſome or unwholeſome food, from virtuous or vicious manners, and other cauſes; but it may be fairly doubted whether there has been really the ſmalleſt perceptible advance in the natural duration of human life ſince firſt we had any authentic hiſtory of man. The prejudices of all ages have indeed been directly contrary to this ſuppoſition; and though I would not lay much ſtreſs upon theſe prejudices, they will in ſome meaſure

tend to prove, that there has been no marked advance in an oppoſite direction.

It may perhaps be ſaid that the world is yet ſo young, ſo completely in its infancy, that it ought not to be expected that any difference ſhould appear ſo ſoon.

If this be the caſe, there is at once an end of all human ſcience. The whole train of reaſonings from effects to cauſes will be deſtroyed. We may ſhut our eyes to the book of nature, as it will no longer be of any uſe to read it. The wildeſt and moſt improbable conjectures may be advanced with as much certainty as the moſt juſt and ſublime theories, founded on careful and reiterated experiments. We may return again to the old mode of philoſophiſing, and make facts bend to ſyſtems, inſtead of eſtabliſhing ſyſtems upon facts. The grand and conſiſtent theory of Newton will be placed upon the ſame footing as the wild and eccentric hypotheſes of Deſcartes. In ſhort, if the laws of nature be thus fickle and inconſtant; if it can be affirmed and be believed that they will change, when for ages and ages they have appeared immutable, the human mind will no longer have any incitements to inquiry, but

muſt

muſt remain fixed in inactive torpor, or amuſe itſelf only in bewildering dreams and extravagant fancies.

The conſtancy of the laws of nature and of effects and cauſes is the foundation of all human knowledge; and if without any previous obſervable ſymptoms or indications of a change we can infer that a change will take place, we may as well make any aſſertion whatever, and think it as unreaſonable to be contradicted, in affirming that the moon will come in contact with the earth to morrow, as in ſaying that the ſun will riſe at its appointed time.

With regard to the duration of human life there does not appear to have exiſted, from the earlieſt ages of the world to the preſent moment, the ſmalleſt permanent ſymptom or indication of increaſing prolongation. The obſervable effects of climate, habit, diet, and other cauſes, on length of life, have furniſhed the pretext for aſſerting its indefinite extenſion; and the ſandy foundation on which the argument reſts is, that becauſe the limit of human life is undefined, becauſe you cannot mark its preciſe term, and ſay ſo far exactly ſhall it go, and no further, therefore its extent may increaſe for ever, and be properly termed indefinite or unlimited.

But

But the fallacy and abſurdity of this argument will ſufficiently appear from a ſlight examination of what M. Condorcet calls the organic perfectibility or degeneration of the race of plants and animals, which, he ſays, may be regarded as one of the general laws of nature.

I have been told, that it is a maxim among ſome of the improvers of cattle that you may breed to any degree of nicety you pleaſe; and they found this maxim upon another, which is, that ſome of the offſpring will poſſeſs the deſirable qualities of the parents in a greater degree. In the famous Leiceſterſhire breed of ſheep, the object is to procure them with ſmall heads and ſmall legs. Proceeding upon theſe breeding maxims it is evident, that we might go on till the heads and legs were evaneſcent quantities; but this is ſo palpable an abſurdity, that we may be quite ſure that the premiſes are not juſt, and that the rereally is a limit, though we cannot ſee it or ſay exactly where it is. In this caſe the point of the greateſt degree of improvement, or the ſmalleſt ſize of the head and legs may be ſaid to be undefined; but this is very different from unlimited, or from indefinite, in M. Condorcet's acceptation of the term. Though I may not be able in the preſent inſtance to mark the limit

limit at which further improvement will ſtop, I can very eaſily mention a point at which it will not arrive. I ſhould not ſcruple to aſſert, that were the breeding to continue for ever, the heads and legs of theſe ſheep would never be ſo ſmall as the head and legs of a rat.

It cannot be true therefore, that among animals ſome of the offspring will poſſeſs the deſirable qualities of the parents in a greater degree; or that animals are indefinitely perfectible.

The progreſs of a wild plant to a beautiful garden flower is perhaps more marked and ſtriking than any thing that takes place among animals; yet even here it would be the height of abſurdity to aſſert, that the progreſs was unlimited or indefinite. One of the moſt obvious features of the improvement is the increaſe of ſize. The flower has grown gradually larger by cultivation. If the progreſs were really unlimited it might be increaſed ad infinitum; but this is ſo groſs an abſurdity that we may be quite ſure, that among plants as well as among animals there is a limit to improvement, though we do not exactly know where it is. It is probable that the gardeners who contend for flower prizes have often applied ſtronger dreſſing

fing without ſucceſs. At the ſame time it would be highly preſumptuous in any man to ſay, that he had ſeen the fineſt carnation or anemone that could ever be made to grow. He might however aſſert without the ſmalleſt chance of being contradicted by a future fact, that no carnation or anemone could ever by cultivation be increaſed to the ſize of a large cabbage; and yet there are aſſignable quantities greater than a cabbage. No man can ſay that he has ſeen the largeſt ear of wheat, or the largeſt oak that could ever grow; but he might eaſily, and with perfect certainty, name a point of magnitude at which they would not arrive. In all theſe caſes therefore, a careful diſtinction ſhould be made between an unlimited progreſs and a progreſs where the limit is merely undefined.

It will be ſaid perhaps, that the reaſon why plants and animals cannot increaſe indefinitely in ſize is, that they would fall by their own weight. I anſwer, how do we know this but from experience? From experience of the degree of ſtrength with which theſe bodies are formed. I know that a carnation long before it reached the ſize of a cabbage would not be ſupported by its ſtalk; but I only know this from my experience

rience of the weakneſs and want of tenacity in the materials of a carnation ſtalk. There might be ſubſtances of the ſame ſize that would ſupport as large a head as a cabbage.

The reaſons of the mortality of plants are at preſent perfectly unknown to us. No man can ſay why ſuch a plant is annual, another biennial, and another endures for ages. The whole affair in all theſe caſes, in plants, animals, and in the human race, is an affair of experience; and I only conclude that man is mortal, becauſe the invariable experience of all ages has proved the mortality of thoſe materials of which this viſible body is made.

"What can we reaſon but from what we know?"

Sound philoſophy will not authoriſe me to alter this opinion of the mortality of man on earth till it can be clearly proved, that the human race has made, and is making, a decided progreſs towards an illimitable extent of life. And the chief reaſon why I adduced the two particular inſtances from animals and plants was to expoſe and illuſtrate, if I could, the fallacy of that argument which infers an unlimited progreſs, merely becauſe ſome partial improvement has taken place, and that the limit of this improvement cannot be preciſely aſcertained.

The

The capacity of improvement in plants and animals, to a certain degree, no perſon can poſſibly doubt. A clear and decided progreſs has already been made; and yet I think it appears that it would be highly abſurd to ſay that this progreſs has no limits. In human life, though there are great variations from different cauſes, it may be doubted whether ſince the world began any organic improvement whatever of the human frame can be clearly aſcertained. The foundations therefore, on which the arguments for the organic perfectibility of man reſt, are unuſually weak, and can only be conſidered as mere conjectures. It does not however by any means ſeem impoſſible, that, by an attention to breed, a certain degree of improvement ſimilar to that among animals might take place among men. Whether intellect could be communicated may be a matter of doubt; but ſize, ſtrength, beauty, complexion, and perhaps even longevity, are in a degree tranſmiſſible. The error does not ſeem to lie in ſuppoſing a ſmall degree of improvement poſſible, but in not diſcriminating between a ſmall improvement, the limit of which is undefined, and an improvement really unlimited. As the human race however could not be improved in this way, without condemning

demning all the bad ſpecimens to celibacy, it is not probable that an attention to breed ſhould ever become general; indeed I know of no well-directed attempts of this kind except in the ancient family of the Bickerſtaffs, who are ſaid to have been very ſucceſsful in whitening the ſkins and increaſing the height of their race by prudent marriages, particularly by that very judicious croſs with Maud the milk-maid, by which ſome capital defects in the conſtitutions of the family were corrected.

It will not be neceſſary, I think, in order more completely to ſhow the improbability of any approach in man towards immortality on earth, to urge the very great additional weight that an increaſe in the duration of life would give to the argument of population.

M. Condorcet's book may be conſidered not only as a ſketch of the opinions of a celebrated individual, but of many of the literary men in France at the beginning of the revolution. As ſuch, though merely a ſketch, it ſeems worthy of attention.

Many, I doubt not, will think that the attempting gravely to controvert ſo abſurd a paradox as the immortality of man on earth, or indeed even the perfectibility of man and ſociety,

ciety, is a waſte of time and words; and that ſuch unfounded conjectures are beſt anſwered by neglect. I profeſs, however, to be of a different opinion. When paradoxes of this kind are advanced by ingenious and able men, neglect has no tendency to convince them of their miſtakes. Priding themſelves on what they conceive to be a mark of the reach and ſize of their own underſtandings, of the extent and comprehenſiveneſs of their views; they will look upon this neglect merely as an indication of poverty and narrowneſs in the mental exertions of their contemporaries; and only think, that the world is not yet prepared to receive their ſublime truths.

On the contrary, a candid inveſtigation of theſe ſubjects, accompanied with a perfect readineſs to adopt any theory warranted by ſound philoſophy, may have a tendency to convince them, that in forming improbable and unfounded hypotheſes, ſo far from enlarging the bounds of human ſcience, they are contracting it; ſo far from promoting the improvement of the human mind, they are obſtructing it: they are throwing us back again almoſt into the infancy of knowledge; and weakening the foundations of that mode of philoſophiſing under the

the auſpices of which ſcience has of late made ſuch rapid advances. The late rage for wide and unreſtrained ſpeculation ſeems to have been a kind of mental intoxication, ariſing perhaps from the great and unexpected diſcoveries which had been made in various branches of ſcience. To men elate and giddy with ſuch ſucceſſes, every thing appeared to be within the graſp of human powers; and under this illuſion they confounded ſubjects where no real progreſs could be proved, with thoſe where the progreſs had been marked, certain, and acknowledged. Could they be perſuaded to ſober themſelves with a little ſevere and chaſtiſed thinking they would ſee, that the cauſe of truth and of ſound philoſophy cannot but ſuffer by ſubſtituting wild flights and unſupported aſſertions, for patient inveſtigation and well authenticated proofs.

CHAP. II.

Of Syſtems of Equality. Godwin.

In reading Mr. Godwin's ingenious work on political juſtice, it is impoſſible not to be ſtruck with the ſpirit and energy of his ſtyle, the force and preciſion of ſome of his reaſonings, the ardent tone of his thoughts, and particularly with that impreſſive earneſtneſs of manner which gives an air of truth to the whole. At the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed that he has not proceeded in his inquiries with the caution that ſound philoſophy requires. His concluſions are often unwarranted by his premiſes. He fails ſometimes in removing objections which he himſelf brings forward. He relies too much on general and abſtract propoſitions which will not admit of application. And his conjectures certainly far outſtrip the modeſty of nature.

The ſyſtem of equality which Mr. Godwin propoſes is, on a firſt view, the moſt beautiful and engaging of any that has yet appeared. A melioration of ſociety to be produced merely by

by reaſon and conviction gives more promiſe of permanence than any change effected and maintained by force. The unlimited exerciſe of private judgment is a doctrine grand and captivating, and has a vaſt ſuperiority over thoſe ſyſtems, where every individual is in a manner the ſlave of the public. The ſubſtitution of benevolence, as the maſterſpring and moving principle of ſociety, inſtead of ſelf-love, appears at firſt ſight to be a conſummation devoutly to be wiſhed. In ſhort, it is impoſſible to contemplate the whole of this fair picture without emotions of delight and admiration, accompanied with an ardent longing for the period of its accompliſhment. But alas! that moment can never arrive. The whole is little better than a dream—a phantom of the imagination. Theſe "gorgeous palaces" of happineſs and immortality, theſe "ſolemn temples" of truth and virtue, will diſſolve, "like the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion," when we awaken to real life, and contemplate the genuine ſituation of man on earth.

Mr. Godwin, at the concluſion of the third chapter of his eighth book, ſpeaking of population, ſays, "There is a principle in human ſo-
"ciety by which population is perpetually kept
"down to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence.

" Thus, among the wandering tribes of America " and Aſia we never find, through the lapſe of " ages, that population has ſo increaſed as to " render neceſſary the cultivation of the earth[a]." This principle which Mr. Godwin thus mentions as ſome myſterious and occult cauſe, and which he does not attempt to inveſtigate, has appeared to be the grinding law of neceſſity—miſery, and the fear of miſery.

The great errour under which Mr. Godwin labours throughout his whole work is, the attributing of almoſt all the vices and miſery that prevail in civil ſociety to human inſtitutions. Political regulations, and the eſtabliſhed adminiſtration of property, are, with him, the fruitful ſources of all evil, the hotbeds of all the crimes that degrade mankind. Were this really a true ſtate of the caſe, it would not ſeem an abſolutely hopeleſs taſk to remove evil completely from the world; and reaſon ſeems to be the proper and adequate inſtrument for effecting ſo great a purpoſe. But the truth is, that though human inſtitutions appear to be the obvious and obtruſive cauſes of much miſchief to mankind, they are, in reality, light and ſuperficial, in compariſon with thoſe deeper-ſeated

[a] p. 460, 8vo. 2d edit.

cauſes

cauſes of evil which reſult from the laws of nature.

In a chapter on the benefits attendant upon a ſyſtem of equality, Mr. Godwin ſays, "The "ſpirit of oppreſſion, the ſpirit of ſervility, and "the ſpirit of fraud, theſe are the immediate "growth of the eſtabliſhed adminiſtration of "property. They are alike hoſtile to intellec- "tual improvement. The other vices of envy, "malice, and revenge, are their inſeparable "companions. In a ſtate of ſociety where men "lived in the midſt of plenty, and where all "ſhared alike the bounties of nature, theſe ſen- "timents would inevitably expire. The nar- "row principle of ſelfiſhneſs would vaniſh. No "man being obliged to guard his little ſtore, or "provide with anxiety and pain for his reſtleſs "wants, each would loſe his individual exiſt- "ence in the thought of the general good. No "man would be an enemy to his neighbours, "for they would have no ſubject of contention; "and of conſequence philanthropy would re- "ſume the empire which reaſon aſſigns her. "Mind would be delivered from her perpetual "anxiety about corporal ſupport; and free to "expatiate in the field of thought which is

" congenial to her. Each would aſſiſt the in-
" quiries of all[a]."

This would indeed be a happy ſtate. But that it is merely an imaginary picture with ſcarcely a feature near the truth, the reader, I am afraid, is already too well convinced.

Man cannot live in the midſt of plenty. All cannot ſhare alike the bounties of nature. Were there no eſtabliſhed adminiſtration of property every man would be obliged to guard with force his little ſtore. Selfiſhneſs would be triumphant. The ſubjects of contention would be perpetual. Every individual would be under a conſtant anxiety about corporal ſupport, and not a ſingle intellect would be left free to expatiate in the field of thought.

How little Mr. Godwin has turned his attention to the real ſtate of human ſociety will ſufficiently appear, from the manner in which he endeavours to remove the difficulty of an overcharged population. He ſays, " The obvious
" anſwer to this objection is, that to reaſon
" thus is to foreſee difficulties at a great diſ-
" tance. Three fourths of the habitable globe
" are now uncultivated. The parts already culti-

[a] Political Juſtice, b. viii. c. iii. p. 458.

" vated are capable of immeaſurable improve-
" ment. Myriads of centuries of ſtill increaſ-
" ing population may paſs away, and the earth
" be ſtill found ſufficient for the ſubſiſtence of
" its inhabitants[a]."

I have already pointed out the errour of ſuppoſing that no diſtreſs or difficulty would ariſe from a redundant population, before the earth abſolutely refuſed to produce any more. But let us imagine for a moment Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem of equality realized in its utmoſt extent, and ſee how ſoon this difficulty might be expected to preſs, under ſo perfect a form of ſociety. A theory that will not admit of application cannot poſſibly be juſt.

Let us ſuppoſe all the cauſes of vice and miſery in this iſland removed. War and contention ceaſe. Unwholeſome trades and manufactories do not exiſt. Crowds no longer collect together in great and peſtilent cities for purpoſes of court intrigue, of commerce, and vicious gratification. Simple, healthy, and rational amuſements take place of drinking, gaming, and debauchery. There are no towns ſufficiently large to have any prejudicial effects on the human conſtitution. The greater part of the happy inhabitants of this terreſtrial Paradiſe

[a] Polit. Juſtice, b. viii. c. ix. p. 510.

live in hamlets and farm houſes ſcattered over the face of the country. All men are equal. The labours of luxury are at an end; and the neceſſary labours of agriculture are ſhared amicably among all. The number of perſons and the produce of the iſland we ſuppoſe to be the ſame as at preſent. The ſpirit of benevolence guided by impartial juſtice will divide this produce among all the members of ſociety according to their wants. Though it would be impoſſible that they ſhould all have animal food every day, yet vegetable food, with meat occaſionally, would ſatisfy the deſires of a frugal people, and would be ſufficient to preſerve them in health, ſtrength, and ſpirits.

Mr. Godwin conſiders marriage as a fraud and a monopoly[a]. Let us ſuppoſe the commerce of the ſexes eſtabliſhed upon principles of the moſt perfect freedom. Mr. Godwin does not think himſelf that this freedom would lead to a promiſcuous intercourſe; and in this I perfectly agree with him. The love of variety is a vicious, corrupt, and unnatural taſte, and could not prevail in any great degree in a ſimple and virtuous ſtate of ſociety. Each man would probably ſelect for himſelf a partner to whom he

[a] Polit. Juſtice, b. viii. c. viii. p. 498 et ſeq.

would

would adhere, as long as that adherence continued to be the choice of both parties. It would be of little conſequence, according to Mr. Godwin, how many children a woman had, or to whom they belonged. Proviſions and aſſiſtance would ſpontaneouſly flow from the quarter in which they abounded to the quarter in which they were deficient[a]. And every man according to his capacity would be ready to furniſh inſtruction to the riſing generation.

I cannot conceive a form of ſociety ſo favourable upon the whole to population. The irremediableneſs of marriage, as it is at preſent conſtituted, undoubtedly deters many from entering into this ſtate. An unſhackled intercourſe on the contrary would be a moſt powerful incitement to early attachments; and as we are ſuppoſing no anxiety about the future ſupport of children to exiſt, I do not conceive that there would be one woman in a hundred, of twenty-three years of age, without a family.

With theſe extraordinary encouragements to population, and every cauſe of depopulation, as we have ſuppoſed, removed, the numbers would neceſſarily increaſe faſter than in any ſociety that has ever yet been known. I have before mentioned that the inhabitants of

[a] Political Juſtice, b v iii. c. viii. p. 504.

the

the back ſettlements of America appear to double their numbers in fifteen years. England is certainly a more healthy country than the back ſettlements of America; and as we have ſuppoſed every houſe in the iſland to be airy and wholeſome, and the encouragements to have a family greater even than in America, no probable reaſon can be aſſigned why the population ſhould not double itſelf in leſs, if poſſible, than fifteen years. But to be quite ſure that we do not go beyond the truth, we will only ſuppoſe the period of doubling to be twenty-five years; a ratio of increaſe which is ſlower than is known to have taken place throughout all the northern ſtates of America.

There can be little doubt that the equalization of property which we have ſuppoſed, added to the circumſtance of the labour of the whole community being directed chiefly to agriculture, would tend greatly to augment the produce of the country. But to anſwer the demands of a population increaſing ſo rapidly, Mr. Godwin's calculation of half an hour a day would certainly not be ſufficient. It is probable that the half of every man's time muſt be employed for this purpoſe. Yet with ſuch or much greater exertions, a perſon who is acquainted with the nature of the ſoil in this country, and who

who reflects on the fertility of the lands already in cultivation, and the barrenneſs of thoſe that are not cultivated, will be very much diſpoſed to doubt whether the whole average produce could poſſibly be doubled in twenty-five years from the preſent period. The only chance of ſucceſs would be from the ploughing up moſt of the grazing countries, and putting an end almoſt entirely to animal food. Yet this ſcheme would probably defeat itſelf. The ſoil of England will not produce much without dreſſing; and cattle ſeem to be neceſſary to make that ſpecies of manure which beſt ſuits the land.

Difficult however as it might be to double the average produce of the iſland in twenty-five years, let us ſuppoſe it effected. At the expiration of the firſt period therefore, the food, though almoſt entirely vegetable, would be ſufficient to ſupport in health the doubled population of 22 millions.

During the next period where will the food be found to ſatisfy the importunate demands of the increaſing numbers? Where is the freſh land to turn up? Where is the dreſſing neceſſary to improve that which is already in cultivation? There is no perſon with the ſmalleſt knowledge of land but would ſay, that it was impoſſible that

that the average produce of the country could be increaſed during the ſecond twenty-five years, by a quantity equal to what it at preſent yields. Yet we will ſuppoſe this increaſe, however improbable, to take place. The exuberant ſtrength of the argument allows of almoſt any conceſſion. Even with this conceſſion however, there would be eleven millions at the expiration of the ſecond term unprovided for. A quantity equal to the frugal ſupport of 33 millions would be to be divided among 44 millions.

Alas! what becomes of the picture, where men lived in the midſt of plenty, where no man was obliged to provide with anxiety and pain for his reſtleſs wants; where the narrow principle of ſelfiſhneſs did not exiſt; where the mind was delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal ſupport, and free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her. This beautiful fabric of the imagination vaniſhes at the ſevere touch of truth. The ſpirit of benevolence, cheriſhed and invigorated by plenty, is repreſſed by the chilling breath of want. The hateful paſſions that had vaniſhed reappear. The mighty law of ſelf-preſervation expels all the ſofter and more exalted emotions of the ſoul. The temptations to evil are too

ſtrong

ſtrong for human nature to reſiſt. The corn is plucked before it is ripe, or ſecreted in unfair proportions; and the whole black train of vices that belong to falſehood are immediately generated. Proviſions no longer flow in for the ſupport of a mother with a large family. The children are ſickly from inſufficient food. The roſy fluſh of health gives place to the pallid cheek and hollow eye of miſery. Benevolence yet lingering in a few boſoms makes ſome faint expiring ſtruggles, till at length ſelf-love reſumes his wonted empire, and lords it triumphant over the world.

No human inſtitutions here exiſted, to the perverſeneſs of which Mr. Godwin aſcribes the original ſin of the worſt men[a]. No oppoſition had been produced by them between public and private good. No monopoly had been created of thoſe advantages which reaſon directs to be left in common. No man had been goaded to the breach of order by unjuſt laws. Benevolence had eſtabliſhed her reign in all hearts. And yet in ſo ſhort a period as fifty years, violence, oppreſſion, falſehood, miſery, every hateful vice, and every form of diſtreſs which degrade and ſadden the preſent ſtate of ſociety,

[a] Polit. Juſtice, b. viii. c. iii. p. 340.

ſeem

ſeem to have been generated by the moſt imperious circumſtances, by laws inherent in the nature of man, and abſolutely independent of all human regulations.

If we be not yet too well convinced of the reality of this melancholy picture, let us but look for a moment into the next period of twenty-five years, and we ſhall ſee 44 millions of human beings without the means of ſupport; and at the concluſion of the firſt century the population would be 176 millions, and the food only ſufficient for 55 millions, leaving 121 millions unprovided for. In theſe ages want indeed would be triumphant, and rapine and murder muſt reign at large: and yet all this time we are ſuppoſing the produce of the earth abſolutely unlimited, and the yearly increaſe greater than the boldeſt ſpeculator can imagine.

This is undoubtedly a very different view of the difficulty ariſing from the principle of population, from that which Mr. Godwin gives, when he ſays, "Myriads of centuries of ſtill "increaſing population may paſs away, and the "earth be ſtill found ſufficient for the ſubſiſt-"ence of its inhabitants."

I am ſufficiently aware that the redundant millions which I have mentioned could never have

have exiſted. It is a perfectly juſt obſervation of Mr. Godwin, that "there is a principle in "human ſociety by which population is per- "petually kept down to the level of the means "of ſubſiſtence." The ſole queſtion is, what is this principle? Is it ſome obſcure and occult cauſe? Is it ſome myſterious interference of Heaven, which at a certain period ſtrikes the men with impotence, and the women with barrenneſs? Or is it a cauſe open to our reſearches, within our view; a cauſe which has conſtantly been obſerved to operate, though with varied force, in every ſtate in which man has been placed. Is it not miſery, and the fear of miſery, the neceſſary and inevitable reſults of the laws of nature, which human inſtitutions, ſo far from aggravating, have tended conſiderably to mitigate, though they can never remove.

It may be curious to obſerve in the caſe that we have been ſuppoſing, how ſome of the principal laws, which at preſent govern civilized ſociety, would be ſucceſſively dictated by the moſt imperious neceſſity. As man, according to Mr. Godwin, is the creature of the impreſſions to which he is ſubject, the goadings of want could not continue long before ſome violations of public or private ſtock would neceſſarily take place.

place. As theſe violations increaſed in number and extent, the more active and comprehenſive intellects of the ſociety would ſoon perceive, that while population was faſt increaſing the yearly produce of the country would ſhortly begin to diminiſh. The urgency of the caſe would ſuggeſt the neceſſity of ſome immediate meaſures being taken for the general ſafety. Some kind of convention would then be called, and the dangerous ſituation of the country ſtated in the ſtrongeſt terms. It would be obſerved, that while they lived in the midſt of plenty it was of little conſequence who laboured the leaſt, or who poſſeſſed the leaſt, as every man was perfectly willing and ready to ſupply the wants of his neighbour. But that the queſtion was no longer whether one man ſhould give to another that which he did not uſe himſelf; but whether he ſhould give to his neighbour the food which was abſolutely neceſſary to his own exiſtence. It would be repreſented, that the number of thoſe who were in want very greatly exceeded the number and means of thoſe who ſhould ſupply them; that theſe preſſing wants, which, from the ſtate of the produce of the country, could not all be gratified, had occaſioned ſome flagrant violations of juſtice;

that theſe violations had already checked the increaſe of food, and would, if they were not by ſome means or other prevented, throw the whole community into confuſion; that imperious neceſſity ſeemed to dictate, that a yearly increaſe of produce ſhould, if poſſible, be obtained at all events; that in order to effect this firſt great and indiſpenſable purpoſe it would be adviſable to make a more complete diviſion of land, and to ſecure every man's property againſt violation by the moſt powerful ſanctions.

It might be urged perhaps, by ſome objectors, that as the fertility of the land increaſed, and various accidents occurred, the ſhares of ſome men might be much more than ſufficient for their ſupport; and that when the reign of ſelf-love was once eſtabliſhed, they would not diſtribute their ſurplus produce without ſome compenſation in return. It would be obſerved in anſwer, that this was an inconvenience greatly to be lamented; but that it was an evil which would bear no compariſon to the black train of diſtreſſes which would inevitably be occaſioned by the inſecurity of property; that the quantity of food which one man could conſume, was neceſſarily limited by the narrow capacity of the human ſtomach; that it was not certainly pro-

bable that he ſhould throw away the reſt; and if he exchanged his ſurplus produce for the labour of others, this would be better than that theſe others ſhould abſolutely ſtarve.

It ſeems highly probable therefore, that an adminiſtration of property not very different from that which prevails in civilized ſtates at preſent would be eſtabliſhed as the beſt though inadequate remedy for the evils which were preſſing on the ſociety.

The next ſubject which would come under diſcuſſion, intimately connected with the preceding, is the commerce of the ſexes. It would be urged by thoſe who had turned their attention to the true cauſe of the difficulties under which the community laboured, that while every man felt ſecure that all his children would be well provided for by general benevolence, the powers of the earth would be abſolutely inadequate to produce food for the population which would inevitably enſue; that even if the whole attention and labour of the ſociety were directed to this ſole point, and if by the moſt perfect ſecurity of property, and every other encouragement that could be thought of, the greateſt poſſible increaſe of produce were yearly obtained; yet ſtill the increaſe of food would by no means keep

pace with the much more rapid increaſe of population; that ſome check to population therefore was imperiouſly called for; that the moſt natural and obvious check ſeemed to be to make every man provide for his own children; that this would operate in ſome reſpect as a meaſure and a guide in the increaſe of population, as it might be expected that no man would bring beings into the world for whom he could not find the means of ſupport; that where this notwithſtanding was the caſe, it ſeemed neceſſary for the example of others, that the diſgrace and inconvenience attending ſuch a conduct ſhould fall upon that individual who had thus inconſiderately plunged himſelf and his innocent children into want and miſery.

The inſtitution of marriage, or at leaſt of ſome expreſs or implied obligation on every man to ſupport his own children, ſeems to be the natural reſult of theſe reaſonings in a community under the difficulties that we have ſuppoſed.

The view of theſe difficulties preſents us with a very natural reaſon why the diſgrace which attends a breach of chaſtity ſhould be greater in a woman than in a man. It could not be expected that women ſhould have re-

ſources ſufficient to ſupport their own children. When, therefore, a woman had lived with a man who had entered into no compact to maintain her children; and, aware of the inconveniences that he might bring upon himſelf, had deſerted her, theſe children muſt neceſſarily fall upon the ſociety for ſupport, or ſtarve. And to prevent the frequent recurrence of ſuch an inconvenience, as it would be highly unjuſt to puniſh ſo natural a fault by perſonal reſtraint or infliction, the men might agree to puniſh it with diſgrace. The offence is beſides more obvious and conſpicuous in the woman, and leſs liable to any miſtake. The father of a child may not always be known; but the ſame uncertainty cannot eaſily exiſt with regard to the mother. Where the evidence of the offence was moſt complete, and the inconvenience to the ſociety at the ſame time the greateſt; there it was agreed that the largeſt ſhare of blame ſhould fall. The obligation on every man to ſupport his children, the ſociety would enforce by poſitive laws; and the greater degree of inconvenience or labour to which a family would neceſſarily ſubject him, added to ſome portion of diſgrace, which every human being muſt incur who leads another into unhappi-

unhappineſs, might be conſidered as a ſufficient puniſhment for the man.

That a woman ſhould at preſent be almoſt driven from ſociety for an offence which men commit nearly with impunity, ſeems to be undoubtedly a breach of natural juſtice. But the origin of the cuſtom, as the moſt obvious and effectual method of preventing the frequent recurrence of a ſerious inconvenience to a community, appears to be natural, though not perhaps perfectly juſtifiable. This origin however is now loſt in the new train of ideas, that the cuſtom has ſince generated. What at firſt might be dictated by ſtate neceſſity is now ſupported by female delicacy; and operates with the greateſt force on that part of the ſociety, where, if the original intention of the cuſtom were preſerved, there is the leaſt real occaſion for it.

When theſe two fundamental laws of ſociety, the ſecurity of property, and the inſtitution of marriage were once eſtabliſhed, inequality of conditions muſt neceſſarily follow. Thoſe who were born after the diviſion of property would come into a world already poſſeſſed. If their parents from having too large a family were unable to give them ſufficient for their ſupport, what could they do in a world where every thing

was appropriated? We have ſeen the fatal effects that would reſult to ſociety, if every man had a valid claim to an equal ſhare of the produce of the earth. The members of a family which was grown too large for the original diviſion of land appropriated to it could not then demand a part of the ſurplus produce of others as a debt of juſtice. It has appeared, that from the inevitable laws of human nature ſome human beings will be expoſed to want. Theſe are the unhappy perſons who in the great lottery of life have drawn a blank. The number of theſe perſons would ſoon exceed the ability of the ſurplus produce to ſupply. Moral merit is a very difficult criterion except in extreme caſes. The owners of ſurplus produce would in general ſeek ſome more obvious mark of diſtinction; and it ſeems to be both natural and juſt, that except upon particular occaſions their choice ſhould fall upon thoſe who were able, and profeſſed themſelves willing to exert their ſtrength in procuring a further ſurplus produce, which would at once benefit the community, and enable the proprietors to afford aſſiſtance to greater numbers. All who were in want of food would be urged by imperious neceſſity to offer their labour in exchange for this article,

ſo

ſo abſolutely neceſſary to exiſtence. The fund appropriated to the maintenance of labour would be the aggregate quantity of food poſſeſſed by the owners of land beyond their own conſumption. When the demands upon this fund were great and numerous it would naturally be divided into very ſmall ſhares. Labour would be ill paid. Men would offer to work for a bare ſubſiſtence; and the rearing of families would be checked by ſickneſs and miſery. On the contrary, when this fund was increaſing faſt; when it was great in proportion to the number of claimants, it would be divided in much larger ſhares. No man would exchange his labour without receiving an ample quantity of food in return. Labourers would live in eaſe and comfort, and would conſequently be able to rear a numerous and vigorous offspring.

On the ſtate of this fund the happineſs or the degree of miſery, prevailing among the lower claſſes of people in every known ſtate, at preſent chiefly depends; and on this happineſs or degree of miſery depends principally the increaſe, ſtationarineſs, or decreaſe of population.

And thus it appears, that a ſociety conſtituted according to the moſt beautiful form that imagination can conceive, with benevolence for its

moving principle inſtead of ſelf-love, and with every evil diſpoſition in all its members corrected by reaſon, not force, would from the inevitable laws of nature, and not from any original depravity of man, or of human inſtitutions, degenerate in a very ſhort period into a ſociety conſtructed upon a plan not eſſentially different from that which prevails in every known ſtate at preſent; a ſociety divided into a claſs of proprietors and a claſs of labourers, and with ſelf-love for the mainſpring of the great machine.

In the ſuppoſition which I have made, I have undoubtedly taken the increaſe of population ſmaller, and the increaſe of produce greater than they really would be. No reaſon can be aſſigned why under the circumſtances ſuppoſed population ſhould not increaſe faſter than in any known inſtance. If then we were to take the period of doubling at fifteen years inſtead of twenty-five years, and reflect upon the labour neceſſary to double the produce in ſo ſhort a time, even if we allow it poſſible; we may venture to pronounce with certainty, that if Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem of ſociety were eſtabliſhed in its utmoſt perfection, inſtead of myriads of centuries, not thirty years could elapſe before its

utter

utter deſtruction from the ſimple principle of population.

I have taken no notice of emigration in this place, for obvious reaſons. If ſuch ſocieties were inſtituted in other parts of Europe, theſe countries would be under the ſame difficulties, with regard to population, and could admit no freſh members into their boſoms. If this beautiful ſociety were confined to this iſland, it muſt have degenerated ſtrangely from its original purity, and adminiſter but a very ſmall portion of the happineſs it propoſed, before any of its members would voluntarily conſent to leave it, and live under ſuch governments as at preſent exiſt in Europe, or ſubmit to the extreme hardſhips of firſt ſettlers in new regions.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Obſervations on the Reply of Mr. Godwin.

MR. Godwin in a late publication has replied to thoſe parts of the Eſſay on the Principle of Population, which he thinks bear the hardeſt on his ſyſtem. A few remarks on this reply will be ſufficient.

In a note to an early part of his pamphlet he obſerves, that the main attack of the eſſay is not directed againſt the principles of his work, but its concluſion[a]. It may be true indeed, that as Mr. Godwin had dedicated one particular chapter towards the concluſion of his work to the conſideration of the objections to his ſyſtem, from the principle of population, this particular chapter is moſt frequently alluded to: but certainly if the great principle of the eſſay be admitted it affects his whole work, and eſſentially alters the foundations of political juſtice. A

[a] Reply to the attacks of Dr. Parr, Mr. Mackintoſh, the author of an Eſſay on Population, and others, p. 10.

great

great part of Mr. Godwin's book consists of an abuse of human institutions, as productive of all or most of the evils which afflict society. The acknowledgment of a new and totally unconsidered cause of misery would evidently alter the state of these arguments, and make it absolutely necessary that they should be either newly modified or entirely rejected.

In the first book of Political Justice, chap. iii. entitled, "The Spirit of Political Institutions," Mr. Godwin observes that "Two of the greatest "abuses relative to the interior policy of nations "which at this time prevail in the world con-"sist in the irregular transfer of property, either "first by violence, or secondly by fraud." And he goes on to say, that if there existed no desire in individuals to possess themselves of the substance of others, and if every man could with perfect facility obtain the necessaries of life, civil society might become what poetry has feigned of the golden age. Let us inquire, he says, into the principles to which these evils are indebted for existence. After acknowledging the truth of the principal argument in the essay on population, I do not think that he could stop in this inquiry at mere human institutions. Many other

other parts of his work would be affected by this consideration in a similar manner.

As Mr. Godwin seems disposed to understand, and candidly to admit the truth of the principal argument in the essay, I feel the more mortified that he should think it a fair inference from my positions, that the political superintendents of a community are bound to exercise a paternal vigilance and care over the two great means of advantage and safety to mankind, misery and vice; and that no evil is more to be dreaded than that we should have too little of them in the world to confine the principle of population within its proper sphere[a]. I am at a loss to conceive what class of evils Mr. Godwin imagines is yet behind, which these salutary checks are to prevent. For my own part I know of no greater evils than vice and misery; and the sole question is respecting the most effectual mode of diminishing them. The only reason why I object to Mr. Godwin's system is my full conviction, that an attempt to execute it would very greatly increase the quantity of vice and misery in society. If Mr. Godwin will undo this conviction, and prove to me though it be only in theory, provided that

[a] Reply, &c. p. 60.

theory

theory be conſiſtent and founded on a knowledge of human nature, that his ſyſtem will really tend to drive vice and miſery from the earth, he may depend upon having me one of its ſteadieſt and warmeſt advocates.

Mr. Godwin obſerves, that he ſhould naturally be diſpoſed to pronounce that man ſtrangely indifferent to ſchemes of extraordinary improvement in ſociety, who made it a concluſive argument againſt them, that when they were realized, they might peradventure be of no permanence and duration. And yet, what is morality individual or political, according to Mr. Godwin's own definition of it, but a calculation of conſequences? Is the phyſician the patron of pain who adviſes his patient to bear a preſent evil rather than betake himſelf to a remedy, which though it might give momentary relief would afterwards greatly aggravate all the ſymptoms? Is the moraliſt to be called an enemy to pleaſure, becauſe he recommends to a young man juſt entering into life not to ruin his health and patrimony in a few years by an exceſs of preſent gratifications, but to economize his enjoyments that he may ſpread them over a longer period? Of Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem, according to the preſent arguments by which it

is

is ſupported, it is not enough to ſay, *peradventure* it will be of no permanence; but we can pronounce with *certainty* that it will be of no permanence: and under ſuch circumſtances an attempt to execute it would unqueſtionably be a great political immorality.

Mr. Godwin obſerves, that after recovering from the firſt impreſſion made by the Eſſay on Population, the firſt thing that is apt to ſtrike every reflecting mind is, that the exceſs of power in the principle of population over the principle of ſubſiſtence has never, in any paſt inſtance, in any quarter or age of the world, produced thoſe great and aſtoniſhing effects, that total breaking up of all the ſtructures and maxims of ſociety, which the eſſay leads us to expect from it in certain caſes in future[a]. This is undoubtedly true; and the reaſon is, that in no paſt inſtance, nor in any quarter or age of the world, has an attempt been made to eſtabliſh ſuch a ſyſtem as Mr. Godwin's, and without an attempt of this nature none of theſe great effects will follow. The convulſions of the ſocial ſyſtem, deſcribed in the laſt chapter, appeared by a kind of irreſiſtible neceſſity, to terminate in the eſtabliſhment of the laws of property and

[a] Reply, p. 70.

marriage;

marriage; but in countries where these laws are already established, as they are in all the common constitutions of society with which we are acquainted, the operation of the principle of population will always be silent and gradual, and not different to what we daily see in our own country. Other persons beside Mr. Godwin have imagined, that I looked to certain periods in future, when population would exceed the means of subsistence in a much greater degree than at present, and that the evils arising from the principle of population were rather in contemplation than in existence; but this is a total misconception of the argument*. Poverty, and not absolute famine, is the specific effect of the principle of population, as I have before endeavoured to show. Many countries are now suffering all the evils that can ever be expected to flow from this principle, and even if we were arrived at the absolute limit to all further increase of produce, a point which we shall certainly never reach, I should by no means expect that these evils would be in any marked manner aggravated. The increase of produce in most European countries is so very slow com-

* In other parts of his Reply, Mr. Godwin does not fall into this errour.

pared

pared with what would be required to ſupport an unreſtricted increaſe of people, that the checks which are conſtantly in action to repreſs the population to the level of a produce increaſing ſo ſlowly would have very little more to do in wearing it down to a produce abſolutely ſtationary.

But Mr. Godwin ſays, that if he looks into the paſt hiſtory of the world, he does not ſee that increaſing population has been controlled and confined by vice and miſery alone. In this obſervation I cannot agree with him. I believe Mr. Godwin would find it difficult to name any check, which in paſt ages has contributed to keep down the population to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence, that does not fairly come under ſome form of vice or miſery; except indeed the check of moral reſtraint, which I have mentioned in the courſe of this work; and which, to ſay the truth, whatever hopes we may entertain of its prevalence in future, has undoubtedly in paſt ages operated with inconſiderable force*.

* It ſhould be recollected always, that by moral reſtraint I mean a reſtraint from marriage from prudential motives which is not followed by irregular gratifications. In this ſenſe I am inclined to believe that the expreſſion I have here uſed is not too ſtrong.

I do not think that I ſhould find it difficult to juſtify myſelf in the eyes of my readers from the imputation of being the patron of vice and miſery; but I am not clear that Mr. Godwin would find ſuch a juſtification ſo eaſy. For though he has poſitively declared that he does not "regard them with complacency;" and "hopes that it may not be conſidered as a taſte "abſolutely ſingular in him, that he ſhould en-"tertain no vehement partialities for vice and "miſery[a];" yet he has certainly expoſed himſelf to the ſuſpicion of having this ſingular taſte, by ſuggeſting the organization of a very large portion of them for the benefit of ſociety in general. On this ſubject I need only obſerve, that I have always ranked the two checks[b] which he firſt

[a] Reply, p. 76.

[b] Mr. Godwin does not acknowledge the juſtice of Hume's obſervation reſpecting infanticide; and yet the extreme population and poverty in China, where this cuſtom prevails, tend ſtrongly to confirm the obſervation. It is ſtill however true, as Mr. Godwin obſerves, that the expedient is, in its own nature, adequate to the end for which it was cited, (p. 66.); but to make it ſo in fact, it muſt be done by the magiſtrate, and not left to the parents. The almoſt invariable tendency of this cuſtom to increaſe population, when it depends entirely on the parents, ſhows the extreme pain which they muſt feel in making ſuch a ſacrifice, even when the diſtreſs

firſt mentions, among the worſt forms of vice and miſery.

In one part of his Reply, Mr. Godwin makes a ſuppoſition reſpecting the number of children that might be allowed to each prolific marriage; but as he has not entered into the detail of the mode by which a greater number might be prevented, I ſhall not notice it further than merely to obſerve, that although he profeſſes to acknowledge the geometrical and arithmetical ratios of population and food, yet in this place he appears to think that practically applied, theſe different ratios of increaſe are not of a nature to make the evil reſulting from them urgent, or alarmingly to confine the natural progreſs of population[a]. This obſervation ſeems to contradict his former acknowledgment.

ariſing from exceſſive poverty may be ſuppoſed to have deadened in great meaſure their ſenſibility. What muſt his pain be then upon the ſuppoſition of the interference of a magiſtrate or of a poſitive law, to make parents deſtroy a child, which they feel the deſire and think they poſſeſs the power of ſupporting? The permiſſion of infanticide is bad enough, and cannot but have a bad effect on the moral ſenſibility of a nation; but I cannot conceive any thing much more deteſtable or ſhocking to the feelings than any direct regulation of this kind, although ſanctioned by the names of Plato and Ariſtotle.

[a] Reply, p. 70.

The

The laſt check which Mr. Godwin mentions, and which I am perſuaded is the only one which he would ſeriouſly recommend is, "that ſenti-"ment, whether virtue, prudence, or pride, "which continually reſtrains the univerſality "and frequent repetition of the marriage con-"tract[a]." On this ſentiment which I have already noticed, it will appear that in the ſequel of this work I ſhall lay conſiderable ſtreſs. Of this check therefore itſelf I entirely approve; but I do not think that Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem of political juſtice is by any means favourable to its prevalence. The tendency to early marriages is ſo ſtrong that we want every poſſible help that we can get to counteract it; and a ſyſtem which in any way whatever tends to weaken the foundation of private property, and to leſſen in any degree the full advantage and ſuperiority which each individual may derive from his prudence, muſt remove the only counteracting weight to the paſſion of love, that can be depended upon for any eſſential effect. Mr. Godwin acknowledges that in his ſyſtem, "the ill "conſequences of a numerous family will not "come ſo coarſely home to each man's indi-"vidual intereſt as they do at preſent[b]." But

[a] Reply, p. 72. [b] Id. p. 74.

I am ſorry to ſay, that from what we know hitherto of the human character we can have no rational hopes of ſucceſs without this coarſe application to individual intereſt, which Mr. Godwin rejects. If the whole effect were to depend merely on a ſenſe of duty, conſidering the powerful antagoniſt that is to be contended with in the preſent caſe, I confeſs that I ſhould abſolutely deſpair. At the ſame time I am ſtrongly of opinion, that a ſenſe of duty, ſuperadded to a ſenſe of intereſt, would by no means be without its effect. There are many noble and diſintereſted ſpirits, who, though aware of the inconveniences which they may bring upon themſelves by the indulgence of an early and virtuous paſſion, feel a kind of repugnance to liſten to the dictates of mere worldly prudence, and a pride in rejecting theſe low conſiderations. There is a kind of romantic gallantry in ſacrificing all for love, naturally faſcinating to a young mind; and to ſay the truth, if all is to be ſacrificed, I do not know in what better cauſe it can be done. But if a ſtrong ſenſe of duty could in theſe inſtances be added to prudential ſuggeſtions, the whole queſtion might wear a different colour. In delaying the gratification of paſſion from a ſenſe of duty, the moſt diſintereſted

tereſted ſpirit, the moſt delicate honour, might be ſatisfied. The romantic pride might take a different direction, and the dictates of worldly prudence might be followed with the cheerful conſciouſneſs of making a virtuous ſacrifice.

If we were to remove or weaken the motive of intereſt, which would be the caſe in Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem, I fear we ſhould have but a weak ſubſtitute in a ſenſe of duty. But if to the preſent beneficial effects known to reſult from a ſenſe of intereſt, we could ſuperadd a ſenſe of duty which is the object of the latter part of this work, it does not ſeem abſolutely hopeleſs, that ſome partial improvement in ſociety ſhould reſult from it.

CHAP. IV.

Of Emigration.

ALTHOUGH the reſource of emigration ſeems to be excluded from ſuch a ſociety as Mr. Godwin has imagined; yet in that partial degree of improvement which alone can rationally be expected, it may fairly enter into our conſideration. And as it is not probable that human induſtry ſhould begin to receive its beſt direction throughout all the nations of the earth at the ſame time, it may be ſaid that in the caſe of a redundant population in the more cultivated parts of the world, the natural and obvious remedy that preſents itſelf is, emigration to thoſe parts that are uncultivated. As theſe parts are of great extent, and very thinly peopled, this reſource might appear, on a firſt view of the ſubject, an adequate remedy, or at leaſt of a nature to remove the evil to a diſtant period: but when we advert to experience, and to the actual ſtate of the uncivilized parts of the globe, inſtead of

any thing like an adequate remedy it will appear but a ſlight palliative.

In the accounts which we have of the peopling of new countries, the dangers, difficulties, and hardſhips, with which the firſt ſettlers have had to ſtruggle, appear to be even greater than we can well imagine they could be expoſed to in their parent ſtate. The endeavour to avoid that degree of unhappineſs ariſing from the difficulty of ſupporting a family might long have left the new world of America unpeopled by Europeans, if thoſe more powerful paſſions the thirſt of gain, the ſpirit of adventure, and religious enthuſiaſm, had not directed and animated the enterpriſe. Theſe paſſions enabled the firſt adventurers to triumph over every obſtacle; but in many inſtances in a way to make humanity ſhudder, and to defeat the true end of emigration. Whatever may be the character of the Spaniſh inhabitants of Mexico and Peru at the preſent moment, we cannot read the accounts of the firſt conqueſts of theſe countries without feeling ſtrongly, that the race deſtroyed was in moral worth as well as numbers ſuperior to the race of their deſtroyers.

The parts of America ſettled by the Engliſh, from being thinly peopled, were better adapted

to the eſtabliſhment of new colonies; yet even here, the moſt formidable difficulties preſented themſelves. In the ſettlement of Virginia, begun by Sir Walter Raleigh, and eſtabliſhed by Lord Delaware, three attempts completely failed. Nearly half of the firſt colony was deſtroyed by the ſavages, and the reſt conſumed and worn down by fatigue and famine deſerted the country, and returned home in deſpair. The ſecond colony was cut off to a man in a manner unknown; but they were ſuppoſed to be deſtroyed by the Indians. The third experienced the ſame diſmal fate; and the remains of the fourth, after it had been reduced by famine and diſeaſe in the courſe of ſix months from 500 to 60 perſons, were returning in a famiſhing and deſperate condition to England, when they were met in the mouth of the Cheſapeak bay by Lord Delaware, with a ſquadron loaded with proviſions, and every thing for their relief and defence[a].

The firſt puritan ſettlers in New England were few in number. They landed in a bad ſeaſon, and were only ſupported by their private funds. The winter was premature and terribly

[a] Burke's America, vol. ii. p. 219. Robertſon, b. ix. p. 85, 86.

cold;

cold; the country was covered with wood, and afforded very little for the refreſhment of perſons ſickly with ſuch a voyage, or for the ſuſtenance of an infant people. Nearly half of them periſhed by the ſcurvy, by want, and the ſeverity of the climate; yet thoſe who ſurvived were not diſpirited by their hardſhips, but ſupported by their energy of character, and the ſatisfaction of finding themſelves out of the reach of the ſpiritual arm, reduced this ſavage country by degrees to yield them a comfortable ſubſiſtence [a].

Even the plantation of Barbadoes, which increaſed afterwards with ſuch extraordinary rapidity, had at firſt to contend with a country utterly deſolate, an extreme want of proviſions, a difficulty in clearing the ground unuſually great from the uncommon ſize and hardneſs of the trees, a moſt diſheartening ſcantineſs and poverty in their firſt crops, and a ſlow and precarious ſupply of proviſions from England [b].

The attempt of the French in 1663, to form at once a powerful colony in Guinea, was attended with the moſt diſaſtrous conſequences. Twelve thouſand men were landed in the rainy ſeaſon, and placed under tents and miſerable ſheds. In this ſituation, inactive, weary of ex-

[a] Burke's America, vol. ii. p. 144. [b] Id. p. 85.

iſtence,

iſtence, and in want of all neceſſaries, expoſed to contagious diſtempers which are always occaſioned by bad proviſions, and to all the irregularities which idleneſs produces among the lower claſſes of ſociety, almoſt the whole of them ended their lives in all the horrors of deſpair. The attempt was completely abortive. Two thouſand men, whoſe robuſt conſtitutions had enabled them to reſiſt the inclemency of the climate and the miſeries to which they had been expoſed, were brought back to France, and the 25,000,000 of livres which had been expended in the expedition were totally loſt[a].

In the late ſettlements at Port Jackſon in New Holland, a melancholy and affecting picture is drawn by Collins of the extreme hardſhips with which, for ſome years, the infant colony had to ſtruggle before the produce was equal to its ſupport. Theſe diſtreſſes were undoubtedly aggravated by the character of the ſettlers; but thoſe which were cauſed by the unhealthineſs of a newly-cleared country, the failure of firſt crops, and the uncertainty of ſupplies from ſo diſtant a mother country, were of themſelves ſufficiently diſ-

[a] Raynal, Hiſt. des Indes, tom. vii. liv. xiii. p. 43. 10 vols. 8vo. 1795.

heartening,

heartening, to place in a ſtrong point of view the neceſſity of great reſources, as well as unconquerable perſeverance, in the colonization of ſavage countries.

The eſtabliſhment of colonies in the more thinly peopled regions of Europe and Aſia would evidently require ſtill greater reſources. From the power and warlike character of the inhabitants of theſe countries, a conſiderable military force would be neceſſary to prevent their utter and immediate deſtruction. Even the frontier provinces of the moſt powerful ſtates are defended with conſiderable difficulty from ſuch reſtleſs neighbours; and the peaceful labours of the cultivator are continually interrupted by their predatory incurſions. The late Empreſs Catharine of Ruſſia found it neceſſary to protect, by regular fortreſſes, the colonies which ſhe had eſtabliſhed in the diſtricts near the Wolga; and the calamities which her ſubjects ſuffered by the incurſions of the Crim Tartars furniſhed a pretext, and perhaps a juſt one, for taking poſſeſſion of the whole of the Crimea, and expelling the greateſt part of theſe turbulent neighbours, and reducing the reſt to a more tranquil mode of life.

The difficulties attending a firſt eſtabliſhment from

from ſoil, climate, and the want of proper conveniences, are of courſe nearly the ſame in theſe regions as in America. Mr. Eton, in his account of the Turkiſh Empire, ſays, that 75,000 Chriſtians were obliged by Ruſſia to emigrate from the Crimea, and ſent to inhabit the country abandoned by the Nogai Tartars; but the winter coming on before the houſes built for them were ready, a great part of them had no other ſhelter from the cold than what was afforded them by holes dug in the ground, covered with what they could procure, and the greateſt part of them periſhed. Only ſeven thouſand remained a few years afterwards. Another colony from Italy to the banks of the Boryſthenes had, he ſays, no better fate, owing to the bad management of thoſe who were commiſſioned to provide for them.

It is needleſs to add to theſe inſtances, as the accounts given of the difficulties experienced in new ſettlements are all nearly ſimilar. It has been juſtly obſerved by a correſpondent of Dr. Franklin, that one of the reaſons why we have ſeen ſo many fruitleſs attempts to ſettle colonies at an immenſe public and private expenſe by ſeveral of the powers of Europe is, that the moral and mechanical habits adapted to the mother

mother country are frequently not ſo to the new-ſettled one, and to external events, many of which are unforeſeen; and that it is to be remarked, that none of the Engliſh colonies became any way conſiderable till the neceſſary manners were born and grew up in the country. Pallas particularly notices the want of proper habits in the colonies eſtabliſhed by Ruſſia, as one of the cauſes why they did not increaſe ſo faſt as might have been expected.

In addition to this it may be obſerved, that the firſt eſtabliſhment of a new colony generally preſents an inſtance of a country peopled conſiderably beyond its actual produce; and the natural conſequence ſeems to be, that this population, if not amply ſupplied by the mother country, ſhould at the commencement be diminiſhed to the level of the firſt ſcanty productions, and not begin permanently to increaſe till the remaining numbers had ſo far cultivated the ſoil as to make it yield a quantity of food more than ſufficient for their own ſupport; and which conſequently they could divide with a family. The frequent failures in the eſtabliſhment of new colonies tend ſtrongly to ſhow the order of precedence between food and population.

It

It muſt be acknowledged then, that the claſs of people on whom the diſtreſs ariſing from a too rapidly increaſing population would principally fall could not poſſibly begin a new colony in a diſtant country. From the nature of their ſituation, they muſt neceſſarily be deficient in thoſe reſources which alone could enſure ſucceſs; and unleſs they could find leaders among the higher claſſes urged by the ſpirit of avarice or enterpriſe, or of religious or political diſcontent; or were furniſhed with means and ſupport by government; whatever degree of miſery they might ſuffer in their own country from the ſcarcity of ſubſiſtence, they would be abſolutely unable to take poſſeſſion of any of thoſe uncultivated regions of which there is ſuch an extent on the earth.

When new colonies have been once ſecurely eſtabliſhed, the difficulty of emigration is indeed very conſiderably diminiſhed; yet, even then, ſome reſources are neceſſary to provide veſſels for the voyage, and ſupport and aſſiſtance till the emigrants can ſettle themſelves, and find employment in their adopted country. How far it is incumbent upon a government to furniſh theſe reſources may be a queſtion; but whatever be its duty in this particular, perhaps it

it is too much to expect, that except where any particular colonial advantages are propoſed emigration ſhould be actively aſſiſted.

The neceſſary reſources for tranſport and maintenance are however frequently furniſhed by individuals or private companies. For many years before the American war, and for ſome few ſince, the facilities of emigration to this new world, and the probable advantages in view, were unuſually great; and it muſt be conſidered undoubtedly as a very happy circumſtance for any country, to have ſo comfortable an aſylum for its redundant population. But I would aſk whether, even during theſe periods, the diſtreſs among the common people in this country was little or nothing, and whether every man felt ſecure before he ventured on marriage, that however large his family might be, he ſhould find no difficulty in ſupporting it without pariſh aſſiſtance. The anſwer, I fear, could not be in the affirmative.

It will be ſaid, that when an opportunity of advantageous emigration is offered, it is the fault of the people themſelves, if inſtead of accepting it they prefer a life of celibacy or extreme poverty in their own country. Is it then a fault for a man to feel an attachment to his native

native ſoil, to love the parents that nurtured him, his kindred, his friends, and the companions of his early years? or is it no evil that he ſuffers, becauſe he conſents to bear it rather than ſnap theſe cords which nature has wound in cloſe and intricate folds round the human heart? The great plan of Providence ſeems to require indeed that theſe ties ſhould ſometimes be broken; but the ſeparation does not, on that account, give leſs pain; and though the general good may be promoted by it, it does not ceaſe to be an individual evil. Beſides, doubts and uncertainty muſt ever attend all diſtant emigrations, particularly in the apprehenſions of the lower claſſes of people. They cannot feel quite ſecure, that the repreſentations made to them of the high price of labour, or the cheapneſs of land, are accurately true. They are placing themſelves in the power of the perſons who are to furniſh them with the means of tranſport and maintenance, who may perhaps have an intereſt in deceiving them; and the ſea which they are to paſs appears to them like the ſeparation of death from all their former connexions, and in a manner to preclude the poſſibility of return in caſe of failure, as they cannot expect the offer of the ſame means to

bring them back. We cannot be ſurpriſed then that except where a ſpirit of enterpriſe is added to the uneaſineſs of poverty, the conſideration of theſe circumſtances ſhould frequently

> "Make them rather bear the ills they ſuffer,
> "Than fly to others which they know not of."

If a tract of rich land as large as this iſland were ſuddenly annexed to it, and ſold in ſmall lots, or let out in ſmall farms, the caſe would be very different, and the melioration of the ſtate of the common people would be ſudden and ſtriking; though the rich would be continually complaining of the high price of labour, the pride of the lower claſſes, and the difficulty of getting work done. Theſe, I underſtand, are not unfrequent complaints among the men of property in America.

Every reſource however, from emigration, if uſed effectually, as this would be, muſt be of ſhort duration. There is ſcarcely a ſtate in Europe except perhaps Ruſſia, the inhabitants of which do not often endeavour to better their condition by removing to other countries. As theſe ſtates therefore have nearly all rather a redundant than deficient population, in proportion to their produce, they cannot be ſuppoſed to afford any effectual reſources of emigration to

each other. Let us ſuppoſe for a moment, that in this more enlightened part of the globe, the internal economy of each ſtate were ſo admirably regulated, that no checks exiſted to population, and the different governments provided every facility for emigration. Taking the population of Europe, excluding Ruſſia, at a hundred millions, and allowing a greater increaſe of produce than is probable, or even poſſible, in the mother countries, the redundancy of parent ſtock in a ſingle century would be eleven hundred millions, which added to the natural increaſe of the colonies, during the ſame time, would more than double what has been ſuppoſed to be the preſent population of the whole earth.

Can we imagine that in the uncultivated parts of Aſia, Africa, or America, the greateſt exertions and the beſt directed endeavours could, in ſo ſhort a period, prepare a quantity of land ſufficient for the ſupport of ſuch a population. If any ſanguine perſon ſhould feel a doubt upon the ſubject, let him only add 25 or 50 years more, and every doubt muſt be cruſhed in overwhelming conviction.

It is evident therefore, that the reaſon why the reſource of emigration has ſo long continued

to

to be held out as a remedy to redundant population is, becauſe from the natural unwillingneſs of people to deſert their native country, and the difficulty of clearing and cultivating freſh ſoil, it never is or can be adequately adopted. If this remedy were indeed really effectual, and had power ſo far to relieve the diſorders of vice and miſery in old ſtates as to place them in the condition of the moſt proſperous new colonies, we ſhould ſoon ſee the phial exhauſted, and when the diſorders returned with increaſed virulence, every hope from this quarter would be for ever cloſed.

It is clear therefore, that with any view of making room for an unreſtricted increaſe of population, emigration is perfectly inadequate; but as a partial and temporary expedient, and with a view to the more general cultivation of the earth, and the wider ſpread of civilization, it ſeems to be both uſeful and proper; and if it cannot be proved that governments are bound actively to encourage it, it is not only ſtrikingly unjuſt, but in the higheſt degree impolitic in them to prevent it. There are no fears ſo totally ill-grounded as the fears of depopulation from emigration. The *vis inertiæ* of people in general, and their attachment to their homes,

are qualities ſo ſtrong and general, that we may reſt aſſured that they will not emigrate, unleſs from political diſcontents or extreme poverty they are in ſuch a ſtate, as will make it as much for the advantage of their country as of themſelves that they ſhould go out of it. The complaints of high wages in conſequence of emigrations are of all others the moſt unreaſonable, and ought the leaſt to be attended to. If the wages of labour in any country be ſuch as to enable the lower claſſes of people to live with tolerable comfort, we may be quite certain that they will not emigrate; and if they be not ſuch it is cruelty and injuſtice to detain them.

CHAP. V.

Of Poor Laws.

To remedy the frequent diſtreſſes of the poor, laws to enforce their relief have been inſtituted; and in the eſtabliſhment of a general ſyſtem of this kind, England has particularly diſtinguiſhed herſelf. But it is to be feared that though it may have alleviated a little the intenſity of individual misfortune, it has ſpread the evil over a much larger ſurface.

It is a ſubject often ſtarted in converſation, and mentioned always as a matter of great ſurpriſe, that notwithſtanding the immenſe ſum which is annually collected for the poor in this country there is ſtill ſo much diſtreſs among them. Some think that the money muſt be embezzled for private uſe; others, that the churchwardens and overſeers conſume the greateſt part of it in feaſting. All agree, that ſomehow or other it muſt be very ill managed. In ſhort, the fact, that even before the late ſcarcities three millions were collected annually for

the poor, and yet that their diſtreſſes were not removed, is the ſubject of continual aſtoniſhment. But a man who looks a little below the ſurface of things would be much more aſtoniſhed, if the fact were otherwiſe than it is obſerved to be; or even if a collection univerſally of eighteen ſhillings in the pound, inſtead of four, were materially to alter it.

Suppoſe, that by a ſubſcription of the rich, the eighteen-pence or two ſhillings, which men earn now, were made up five ſhillings, it might be imagined, perhaps, that they would then be able to live comfortably, and have a piece of meat every day for their dinner. But this would be a very falſe concluſion. The transfer of three additional ſhillings a day to each labourer would not increaſe the quantity of meat in the country. There is not at preſent enough for all to have a moderate ſhare. What would then be the conſequence? the competition among the buyers in the market of meat would rapidly raiſe the price from eight pence or nine pence to two or three ſhillings in the pound, and the commodity would not be divided among many more than it is at preſent. When an article is ſcarce, and cannot be diſtributed to all, he that can ſhow the moſt valid patent, that is, he that offers

offers the moſt money, becomes the poſſeſſor. If we can ſuppoſe the competition among the buyers of meat to continue long enough for a greater number of cattle to be reared annually, this could only be done at the expenſe of the corn, which would be a very diſadvantageous exchange; for it is well known, that the country could not then ſupport the ſame population; and when ſubſiſtence is ſcarce in proportion to the number of people it is of little conſequence whether the loweſt members of the ſociety poſſeſs two ſhillings or five. They muſt, at all events, be reduced to live upon the hardeſt fare and in the ſmalleſt quantity.

It might be ſaid perhaps, that the increaſed number of purchaſers in every article would give a ſpur to productive induſtry, and that the whole produce of the iſland would be increaſed. But the ſpur that theſe fancied riches would give to population would more than counterbalance it; and the increaſed produce would be to be divided among a more than proportionably increaſed number of people.

A collection from the rich of eighteen ſhillings in the pound, even if diſtributed in the moſt judicious manner, would have an effect ſimilar to that reſulting from the ſuppoſition

which I have juſt made; and no poſſible ſacrifices of the rich, particularly in money, could for any time prevent the recurrence of diſtreſs among the lower members of ſociety, who ever they were. Great changes might indeed be made. The rich might become poor, and ſome of the poor rich; but while the preſent proportion between population and food continues, a part of ſociety muſt neceſſarily find it difficult to ſupport a family, and this difficulty will naturally fall on the leaſt fortunate members.

It may at firſt appear ſtrange, but I believe it is true, that I cannot by means of money raiſe the condition of a poor man, and enable him to live much better than he did before, without proportionably depreſſing others in the ſame claſs. If I retrench the quantity of food conſumed in my houſe, and give him what I have cut off, I then benefit him without depreſſing any but myſelf and family, who perhaps may be well able to bear it. If I turn up a piece of uncultivated land, and give him the produce, I then benefit both him and all the members of ſociety, becauſe what he before conſumed is thrown into the common ſtock, and probably ſome of the new produce with it. But if I only give him money, ſuppoſing the produce of the

the country to remain the ſame, I give him a title to a larger ſhare of that produce than formerly, which ſhare he cannot receive without diminiſhing the ſhares of others. It is evident that this effect in individual inſtances muſt be ſo ſmall as to be totally imperceptible; but ſtill it muſt exiſt, as many other effects do, which like ſome of the inſects that people the air elude our groſſer perceptions.

Suppoſing the quantity of food in any country to remain the ſame for many years together, it is evident that this food muſt be divided according to the value of each man's patent, or the ſum of money which he can afford to ſpend in this commodity ſo univerſally in requeſt. It is a demonſtrative truth therefore, that the patents of one ſet of men could not be increaſed in value, without diminiſhing the value of the patents of ſome other ſet of men. If the rich were to ſubſcribe and give five ſhillings a day to five hundred thouſand men, without retrenching their own tables, no doubt can exiſt that as theſe men would live more at their eaſe, and conſume a greater quantity of proviſions, there would be leſs food remaining to divide among the reſt; and conſequently each man's patent would be diminiſhed in value, or the ſame number of

pieces of ſilver would purchaſe a ſmaller quantity of ſubſiſtence, and the price of proviſions would univerſally riſe.

Theſe general reaſonings have been ſtrikingly confirmed during the late ſcarcities. The ſuppoſition which I have made of a collection from the rich of eighteen ſhillings in the pound has been nearly realized; and the effect has been ſuch as might have been expected. If the ſame diſtribution had been made when no ſcarcity exiſted, a conſiderable advance in the price of proviſions would have been a neceſſary conſequence; but following as it did a ſcarcity, its effect muſt have been doubly powerful. No perſon, I believe, will venture to doubt, that if we were to give three additional ſhillings a day to every labouring man in the kingdom, as I before ſuppoſed, in order that he might have meat for his dinner, the price of meat would riſe in the moſt rapid and unexampled manner. But ſurely, in a deficiency of corn, which renders it impoſſible for every man to have his uſual ſhare, if we ſtill continue to furniſh each perſon with the means of purchaſing the ſame quantity as before, the effect muſt be in every reſpect ſimilar.

It ſeems in great meaſure to have eſcaped obſervation,

obſervation, that the price of corn in a ſcarcity will depend much more upon the obſtinacy with which the ſame degree of conſumption is perſevered in, than on the degree of the actual deficiency. A deficiency of one half of a crop, if the people could immediately conſent to conſume only one half of what they did before, would produce little or no effect on the price of corn. A deficiency of one twelfth, if exactly the ſame conſumption were to continue for ten or eleven months, might raiſe the price of corn to almoſt any height. The more is given in pariſh aſſiſtance, the more power is furniſhed of perſevering in the ſame conſumption, and of courſe the higher will the price riſe before the neceſſary diminution of conſumption is effected.

It has been aſſerted by ſome people that high prices do not diminiſh conſumption. If this were really true, we ſhould ſee the price of a buſhel of corn at a hundred pounds or more, in every deficiency, which could not be fully and completely remedied by importation. But the fact is, that high prices do ultimately diminiſh conſumption; but on account of the riches of the country, the unwillingneſs of the people to reſort to ſubſtitutes, and the immenſe ſums which are diſtributed by pariſhes, this object cannot

cannot be attained till the prices become exceſſive, and force even the middle claſſes of ſociety, or at leaſt thoſe immediately above the poor, to ſave in the article of bread from the actual inability of purchaſing it in the uſual quantity. The poor who were aſſiſted by their pariſhes had no reaſon whatever to complain of the high price of grain; becauſe it was the exceſſiveneſs of this price, and this alone, which by enforcing ſuch a ſaving left a greater quantity of corn for the conſumption of the loweſt claſſes, which corn the pariſh allowances enabled them to command. The greateſt ſufferers in the ſcarcity were undoubtedly the claſſes immediately above the poor; and theſe were in the moſt marked manner depreſſed by the exceſſive bounties given to thoſe below them. Almoſt all poverty is relative; and I much doubt whether theſe people would have been rendered ſo poor if a ſum equal to half of theſe bounties had been taken directly out of their pockets, as they were, by that new diſtribution of the money of the ſociety which actually took place[a]. This

[a] Suppoſing the lower claſſes to earn on an average ten ſhillings a week, and the claſſes juſt above them twenty, it is not to be doubted, that in a ſcarcity theſe latter would be more ſtraightened in their power of commanding the neceſſaries

This diſtribution by giving to the poorer claſſes a command of food, ſo much greater than that to which their degree of ſkill and induſtry entitled them, in the actual circumſtances of the country, diminiſhed exactly in the ſame proportion that command over the neceſſaries of life, which the claſſes above them, by their ſuperior ſkill and induſtry, would naturally poſſeſs; and it may be a queſtion whether the degree of aſſiſtance which the poor received, and which prevented them from reſorting to the uſe of thoſe ſubſtitutes, which in every other country on ſuch occaſions the great law of neceſſity teaches, was not more than overbalanced by the ſeverity of the preſſure on ſo large a body of people from the extreme high prices, and the permanent evil which muſt reſult from forcing

ceſſaries of life, by a donation of ten ſhillings a week to thoſe below them, than by the ſubtraction of five ſhillings a week from their own earnings. In the one caſe, they would be all reduced to a level; the price of proviſions would riſe in an extraordinary manner from the greatneſs of the competition; and all would be ſtraightened for ſubſiſtence. In the other caſe, the claſſes above the poor would ſtill maintain a conſiderable part of their relative ſuperiority; the price of proviſions would by no means riſe in the ſame degree; and their remaining fifteen ſhillings would purchaſe much more than their twenty ſhillings in the former caſe.

ſo many perſons on the pariſh, who before thought themſelves almoſt out of the reach of want.

If we were to double the fortunes of all thoſe who poſſeſs above a hundred a year, the effect on the price of grain would be ſlow and inconſiderable; but if we were to double the price of labour throughout the kingdom, the effect in raiſing the price of grain would be rapid and great. The general principles on this ſubject will not admit of diſpute; and that in the particular caſe which we have been conſidering, the bounties to the poor were of a magnitude to operate very powerfully in this manner will ſufficiently appear, if we recollect, that before the late ſcarcities the ſum collected for the poor was eſtimated at three millions, and that during the year 1801 it was ſaid to be ten millions. An additional ſeven millions acting at the bottom of the ſcale[a], and employed excluſively

[a] See a ſmall pamphlet publiſhed in November 1800, entitled, *An inveſtigation of the cauſe of the preſent high price of proviſions.* This pamphlet was miſtaken by ſome for an inquiry into the cauſe of the ſcarcity, and as ſuch it would naturally appear to be incomplete, adverting, as it does, principally to a ſingle cauſe. But the ſole object of the pamphlet was to give the principal reaſon for the extreme high price of proviſions,

ſively in the purchaſe of proviſions, joined to a conſiderable advance in the price of wages in many parts of the kingdom, and increaſed by a prodigious ſum expended in voluntary charity, muſt have had a moſt powerful effect in raiſing the price of the neceſſaries of life, if any reliance can be placed on the cleareſt general principles confirmed as much as poſſible by appearances. A man with a family has received, to my knowledge, fourteen ſhillings a week from the pariſh. His common earnings were ten ſhillings a week, and his weekly revenue therefore, twenty-four. Before the ſcarcity he had been in the habit of purchaſing a buſhel of flour a week with eight ſhillings perhaps, and conſequently had two ſhillings out of his ten, to ſpare for other neceſſaries. During the ſcarcity he was enabled to purchaſe the ſame quantity at nearly three times the price. He paid twenty-two ſhillings for his buſhel of flour, and had as before two ſhillings remaining for other wants. Such inſtances could not poſſibly have been univerſal, without raiſing the price of wheat very much

viſions, in proportion to the degree of the ſcarcity, admitting the deficiency of one fourth, as ſtated in the Duke of Portland's letter; which, I am much inclined to think, was very near the truth.

higher

higher than it really was during any part of the dearth. But ſimilar inſtances were by no means infrequent, and the ſyſtem itſelf of meaſuring the relief given by the price of grain was general.

If the circulation of the country had conſiſted entirely of ſpecie, which could not have been immediately increaſed, it would have been impoſſible to give ſuch an additional ſum as ſeven millions to the poor without embarraſſing to a great degree the operations of commerce. On the commencement therefore of this extenſive relief, which would neceſſarily occaſion a proportionate expenditure in proviſions throughout all the ranks of ſociety, a great demand would be felt for an increaſed circulating medium. The nature of the medium then principally in uſe was ſuch, that it could be created immediately on demand. From the accounts of the bank of England, as laid before Parliament, it appeared that no very great additional iſſues of paper took place from this quarter. The three millions and a half added to its former average iſſues were not probably much above what was ſufficient to ſupply the quantity of ſpecie, that had been withdrawn from the circulation. If this ſuppoſition be true, and the ſmall quantity of

of gold which made its appearance at that time furniſhes the ſtrongeſt reaſon for believing that nearly as much as this muſt have been withdrawn, it would follow that the part of the circulation originating in the bank of England, though changed in its nature, had not been much increaſed in its quantity; and with regard to the effect of the circulating medium on the price of all commodities it cannot be doubted, that it would be preciſely the ſame whether it were made up principally of guineas, or of pound notes and ſhillings which would paſs current for guineas.

The demand therefore for an increaſed circulating medium was left to be ſupplied principally by the country banks, and it could not be expected that they ſhould heſitate in taking advantage of ſo profitable an opportunity. The paper iſſues of a country bank are, as I conceive, meaſured by the quantity of its notes which will remain in circulation; and this quantity is again meaſured, ſuppoſing a confidence to be eſtabliſhed, by the ſum of what is wanted to carry on all the money tranſactions of the neighbourhood. From the high price of proviſions, all theſe tranſactions became more

expenſive. In the ſingle article of the weekly payment of labourers' wages, including the pariſh allowances, it is evident that a very great addition to the circulating medium of the neighbourhood would be wanted. Had the country banks attempted to iſſue the ſame quantity of paper without ſuch a particular demand for it, they would quickly have been admoniſhed of their errour by its rapid and preſſing return upon them; but at this time it was wanted for immediate and daily uſe, and was therefore eagerly abſorbed into the circulation.

It may even admit of a queſtion, whether under ſimilar circumſtances the country banks would not have iſſued nearly the ſame quantity of paper, if the bank of England had not been reſtricted from payment in ſpecie. Before this event the iſſues of the country banks in paper were regulated by the quantity that the circulation would take up, and after, as well as before, they were obliged to pay the notes which returned upon them in bank of England circulation. The difference in the two caſes would ariſe principally from the pernicious cuſtom, adopted ſince the reſtriction of the bank, of iſſuing one and two pound notes, and from the little

little preference that many people might feel, if they could not get gold, between country bank paper and bank of England paper.

The very great iſſue of country bank paper during the years 1800 and 1801 was evidently therefore, in its origin rather a conſequence than a cauſe of the high price of proviſions; but being once abſorbed into the circulation, it muſt neceſſarily affect the price of all commodities, and throw very great obſtacles in the way of returning cheapneſs. This is the great miſchief of the ſyſtem. During the ſcarcity, it is not to be doubted that the increaſed circulation, by preventing the embarraſſments which commerce and ſpeculation muſt otherwiſe have felt, enabled the country to continue all the branches of its trade with leſs interruption, and to import a much greater quantity of grain than it could have done otherwiſe; but to overbalance theſe temporary advantages, a laſting evil might be entailed upon the community, and the prices of a time of ſcarcity might become permanent, from the difficulty of reabſorbing this increaſed circulation.

In this reſpect however, it is much better that the great iſſue of paper ſhould have come from the country banks than from the bank of

England. During the reſtriction of payment in ſpecie, there is no poſſibility of forcing the bank to retake its notes when too abundant; but with regard to the country banks, as ſoon as their notes are not wanted in the circulation they will be returned; and if the bank of England notes be not increaſed, the whole circulating medium will thus be diminiſhed.

We may conſider ourſelves as peculiarly fortunate, that the two years of ſcarcity were ſucceeded by two events the beſt calculated to reſtore plenty and cheapneſs—an abundant harveſt and a peace; which together produced a general conviction of plenty, in the minds both of buyers and ſellers; and by rendering the firſt ſlow to purchaſe, and the others eager to ſell, occaſioned a glut in the market, and a conſequent rapid fall of price, which has enabled pariſhes to take off their allowances to the poor, and thus to prevent a return of high prices when the alarm among the ſellers was over.

If the two years of ſcarcity had been ſucceeded merely by years of average crops, I am ſtrongly diſpoſed to believe, that as no glut would have taken place in the market, the price of grain would have fallen only in an inconſiderable degree, the pariſh allowances could not have been

been reſumed, the increaſed quantity of paper would ſtill have been wanted, and the prices of all commodities might by degrees have been regulated permanently, according to the increaſed circulating medium.

If inſtead of giving the temporary aſſiſtance of pariſh allowances, which might be withdrawn on the firſt fall of price, we had raiſed univerſally the wages of labour, it is evident that the obſtacles to a diminution of the circulation, and to returning cheapneſs, would have been ſtill further increaſed; and the high price of labour would have become permanent, without any advantage whatever to the labourer.

There is no one that more ardently deſires to ſee a real advance in the price of labour than myſelf; but the attempt to effect this object by forcibly raiſing the nominal price, which was practiſed to a certain degree, and recommended almoſt univerſally during the late ſcarcities, every thinking man muſt reprobate as puerile and ineffectual.

The price of labour, when left to find its natural level, is a moſt important political barometer, expreſſing the relation between the ſupply of proviſions, and the demand for them; between the quantity to be conſumed and the

number of conſumers; and taken on the average, independently of accidental circumſtances, it further expreſſes clearly the wants of the ſociety reſpecting population; that is, whatever may be the number of children to a marriage neceſſary to maintain exactly the preſent population, the price of labour will be juſt ſufficient to ſupport this number, or be above it, or below it, according to the ſtate of the real funds for the maintenance of labour, whether ſtationary, progreſſive, or retrograde. Inſtead however, of conſidering it in this light, we conſider it as ſomething which we may raiſe or depreſs at pleaſure, ſomething which depends principally upon his majeſty's juſtices of the peace. When an advance in the price of proviſions already expreſſes that the demand is too great for the ſupply, in order to put the labourer in the ſame condition as before, we raiſe the price of labour, that is, we increaſe the demand, and are then much ſurpriſed that the price of proviſions continues riſing. In this we act much in the ſame manner as if, when the quickſilver in the common weather-glaſs ſtood at *ſtormy*, we were to raiſe it by ſome mechanical preſſure to *ſettled fair*, and then be greatly aſtoniſhed that it continued raining.

Dr,

Dr. Smith has clearly ſhown, that the natural tendency of a year of ſcarcity is either to throw a number of labourers out of employment, or to oblige them to work for leſs than they did before, from the inability of maſters to employ the ſame number at the ſame price. The raiſing of the price of wages tends neceſſarily to throw more out of employment, and completely to prevent the good effects which, he ſays, ſometimes ariſe from a year of moderate ſcarcity, that of making the lower claſſes of people do more work, and become more careful and induſtrious. The number of ſervants out of place, and the manufacturers wanting employment, during the late ſcarcities, were melancholy proofs of the truth of theſe reaſonings. If a general riſe in the wages of labour had taken place proportioned to the price of proviſions, none but farmers and a few gentlemen could have afforded to employ the ſame number of workmen as before. Additional crowds of ſervants and manufacturers would have been turned off; and thoſe who were thus thrown out of employment would of courſe have no other refuge than the pariſh. In the natural order of things a ſcarcity muſt tend to lower, inſtead of to raiſe, the price of labour.

After the publication and general circulation of ſuch a work as Dr. Smith's, I confeſs it appears to me ſtrange, that ſo many men who would yet aſpire to be thought political economiſts ſhould ſtill think that it is in the power of the juſtices of the peace, or even of the omnipotence of parliament, to alter by a *fiat* the whole circumſtances of the country; and when the demand for proviſions is greater than the ſupply, by publiſhing a particular edict to make the ſupply at once equal to or greater than the demand. Many men who would ſhrink at the propoſal of a maximum would propoſe themſelves, that the price of labour ſhould be proportioned to the price of proviſions, and do not ſeem to be aware that the two propoſals are very nearly of the ſame nature, and that both tend directly to famine. It matters not whether we enable the labourer to purchaſe the ſame quantity of proviſions which he did before by fixing their price, or by raiſing in proportion the price of labour. The only advantage on the ſide of raiſing the price of labour is, that the riſe in the price of proviſions which neceſſarily follows it encourages importation: but putting importation out of the queſtion, which might poſſibly be prevented by war, or other circumſtances, a univerſal

univerſal riſe of wages in proportion to the price of proviſions, aided by adequate pariſh allowances to thoſe who were thrown out of work, would, by preventing any kind of ſaving, in the ſame manner as a maximum, cauſe the whole crop to be conſumed in nine months which ought to have laſted twelve, and thus produce a famine. At the ſame time we muſt not forget that both humanity and true policy imperiouſly require, that we ſhould give every aſſiſtance to the poor on theſe occaſions that the nature of the caſe will admit. If proviſions were to continue at the price of ſcarcity, the wages of labour muſt neceſſarily riſe, or ſickneſs and famine would quickly diminiſh the number of labourers, and the ſupply of labour being unequal to the demand, its price would ſoon riſe in a ſtill greater proportion than the price of proviſions. But even one or two years of ſcarcity, if the poor were left entirely to ſhift for themſelves, might produce ſome effect of this kind, and conſequently it is our intereſt as well as our duty to give them temporary aid in ſuch ſeaſons of diſtreſs. It is on ſuch occaſions that every cheap ſubſtitute for bread, and every mode of economizing food ſhould be reſorted to. Nor ſhould we be too ready to complain of that high price

price of corn which by encouraging importation increaſes the ſupply.

As the inefficacy of poor laws, and of attempts forcibly to raiſe the price of labour, are moſt conſpicuous in a ſcarcity, I have thought myſelf juſtified in conſidering them under this view; and as theſe cauſes of increaſed price received great additional force during the late ſcarcity from the increaſe of the circulating medium, I truſt that the few obſervations which I have made on this ſubject will be conſidered as an allowable digreſſion.

CHAP. VI.

Subject of Poor Laws continued.

INDEPENDENTLY of any conſiderations reſpecting a year of deficient crops it is evident, that an increaſe of population without a proportional increaſe of food muſt lower the value of each man's earnings. The food muſt neceſſarily be diſtributed in ſmaller quantities, and conſequently a day's labour will purchaſe a ſmaller quantity of proviſions. An increaſe in the price of proviſions will ariſe either from an increaſe of population faſter than the means of ſubſiſtence, or from a different diſtribution of the money of the ſociety. The food of a country which has been long peopled, if it be increaſing, increaſes ſlowly and regularly, and cannot be made to anſwer any ſudden demands; but variations in the diſtribution of the money of the ſociety are not unfrequently occurring, and are undoubtedly among the cauſes which occaſion the continual variations in the prices of proviſions.

The

The poor laws of England tend to depreſs the general condition of the poor in theſe two ways. Their firſt obvious tendency is to increaſe population without increaſing the food for its ſupport. A poor man may marry with little or no proſpect of being able to ſupport a family without pariſh aſſiſtance. They may be ſaid therefore, to create the poor which they maintain; and as the proviſions of the country muſt, in conſequence of the increaſed population, be diſtributed to every man in ſmaller proportions, it is evident that the labour of thoſe who are not ſupported by pariſh aſſiſtance will purchaſe a ſmaller quantity of proviſions than before, and conſequently more of them muſt be driven to apply for aſſiſtance.

Secondly, the quantity of proviſions conſumed in workhouſes, upon a part of the ſociety that cannot in general be conſidered as the moſt valuable part, diminiſhes the ſhares that would otherwiſe belong to more induſtrious and more worthy members, and thus, in the ſame manner, forces more to become dependent. If the poor in the workhouſes were to live better than they do now, this new diſtribution of the money of the ſociety would tend more conſpicuouſly to depreſs the condition of thoſe out of the workhouſes

houſes by occaſioning an advance in the price of proviſions.

Fortunately for England, a ſpirit of independence ſtill remains among the peaſantry. The poor laws are ſtrongly calculated to eradicate this ſpirit. They have ſucceeded in part; but had they ſucceeded as completely as might have been expected, their pernicious tendency would not have been ſo long concealed.

Hard as it may appear in individual inſtances, dependent poverty ought to be held diſgraceful. Such a ſtimulus ſeems to be abſolutely neceſſary to promote the happineſs of the great maſs of mankind; and every general attempt to weaken this ſtimulus, however benevolent its intention, will always defeat its own purpoſe. If men be induced to marry from the mere proſpect of pariſh proviſion, they are not only unjuſtly tempted to bring unhappineſs and dependence upon themſelves and children, but they are tempted without knowing it, to injure all in the ſame claſs with themſelves.

The pariſh laws of England appear to have contributed to raiſe the price of proviſions, and to lower the real price of labour. They have therefore contributed to impoveriſh that claſs of people whoſe only poſſeſſion is their labour. It

is

is alſo difficult to ſuppoſe that they have not powerfully contributed to generate that careleſſneſs and want of frugality obſervable among the poor, ſo contrary to the diſpoſition generally to be remarked among petty tradeſmen and ſmall farmers. The labouring poor, to uſe a vulgar expreſſion, ſeem always to live from hand to mouth. Their preſent wants employ their whole attention; and they ſeldom think of the future. Even when they have an opportunity of ſaving they ſeldom exerciſe it; but all that they earn beyond their preſent neceſſities goes, generally ſpeaking, to the alehouſe. The poor laws may therefore be ſaid to diminiſh both the power and the will to ſave among the common people, and thus to weaken one of the ſtrongeſt incentives to ſobriety and induſtry, and conſequently to happineſs.

It is a general complaint among maſter manufacturers that high wages ruin all their workmen; but it is difficult to conceive that theſe men would not ſave a part of their high wages for the future ſupport of their families, inſtead of ſpending it in drunkenneſs and diſſipation, if they did not rely on pariſh aſſiſtance for ſupport in caſe of accidents. And that the poor employed in manufactures conſider this aſſiſtance

as a reaſon why they may ſpend all the wages which they earn, and enjoy themſelves while they can, appears to be evident, from the number of families that upon the failure of any great manufactory immediately fall upon the pariſh; when perhaps the wages earned in this manufactory while it flouriſhed were ſufficiently above the price of common country labour, to have allowed them to ſave enough for their ſupport, till they could find ſome other channel for their induſtry.

A man who might not be deterred from going to the alehouſe from the conſideration, that on his death or ſickneſs he ſhould leave his wife and family upon the pariſh, might yet heſitate in thus diſſipating his earnings, if he were aſſured that in either of theſe caſes his family muſt ſtarve, or be left to the ſupport of caſual bounty.

The maſs of happineſs among the common people cannot but be diminiſhed, when one of the ſtrongeſt checks to idleneſs and diſſipation is thus removed; and poſitive inſtitutions which render dependent poverty ſo general weaken that diſgrace, which for the beſt and moſt humane reaſons ought to be attached to it.

The poor laws of England were undoubtedly inſtituted

inſtituted for the moſt benevolent purpoſe; but it is evident they have failed in attaining it. They certainly mitigate ſome caſes of ſevere diſtreſs which might otherwiſe occur, though the ſtate of the poor who are ſupported by pariſhes, conſidered in all its circumſtances, is very miſerable. But one of the principal objections to the ſyſtem is, that for the aſſiſtance which ſome of the poor receive, in itſelf almoſt a doubtful bleſſing, the whole claſs of common people of England is ſubjected to a ſet of grating, inconvenient, and tyrannical laws, totally inconſiſtent with the genuine ſpirit of the conſtitution. The whole buſineſs of ſettlements, even in its preſent amended ſtate, is contradictory to all ideas of freedom. The pariſh perſecution of men whoſe families are likely to become chargeable, and of poor women who are near lying in, is a moſt diſgraceful and diſguſting tyranny. And the obſtructions continually occaſioned in the market of labour by theſe laws have a conſtant tendency, to add to the difficulties of thoſe who are ſtruggling to ſupport themſelves without aſſiſtance.

Theſe evils attendant on the poor laws ſeem to be irremediable. If aſſiſtance be to be diſtributed to a certain claſs of people, a power

muſt

muſt be lodged ſomewhere of diſcriminating the proper objects, and of managing the concerns of the inſtitutions that are neceſſary; but any great interference with the affairs of other people is a ſpecies of tyranny, and in the common courſe of things, the exerciſe of this power may be expected to become grating to thoſe who are driven to aſk for ſupport. The tyranny of juſtices, churchwardens, and overſeers, is a common complaint among the poor; but the fault does not lie ſo much in theſe perſons, who probably before they were in power were not worſe than other people, but in the nature of all ſuch inſtitutions.

I feel perſuaded, that if the poor laws had never exiſted in this country, though there might have been a few more inſtances of very ſevere diſtreſs, the aggregate maſs of happineſs among the common people would have been much greater than it is at preſent.

The radical defect of all ſyſtems of the kind is that of tending to increaſe population without increaſing the means for its ſupport, and by thus depreſſing the condition of thoſe that are not relieved by pariſhes to create more poor. If, indeed, we examine ſome of our ſtatutes ſtrictly with reference to the principle of popu-

lation, we ſhall find that they attempt an abſolute impoſſibility; and we cannot be ſurpriſed therefore, that they ſhould conſtantly fail in the attainment of their object.

The famous 43d of Elizabeth, which has been ſo often referred to and admired, enacts, that the overſeers of the poor, "ſhall take order "from time to time, by and with the conſent "of two or more juſtices, for ſetting to work "the children of all ſuch whoſe parents ſhall "not by the ſaid perſons be thought able to "keep and maintain their children; and alſo "ſuch perſons married or unmarried, as having "no means to maintain them, uſe no ordinary "and daily trade of life to get their living by. "And alſo to raiſe, weekly or otherwiſe, by "taxation of every inhabitant, and every occupier of lands in the ſaid pariſh, (in ſuch competent ſums as they ſhall think fit) a convenient ſtock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, "iron, and other neceſſary ware and ſtuff, to "ſet the poor to work."

What is this but ſaying that the funds for the maintenance of labour in this country may be increaſed at will, and without limit, by a *fiat* of government, or an aſſeſſment of the overſeers. Strictly ſpeaking, this clauſe is as arrogant

gant and as abſurd as if it had enacted that two ears of wheat ſhould in future grow where one only had grown before. Canute, when he commanded the waves not to wet his princely foot, did not in reality aſſume a greater power over the laws of nature. No directions are given to the overſeers how to increaſe the funds for the maintenance of labour; the neceſſity of induſtry, economy, and enlightened exertion, in the management of agricultural and commercial capital is not inſiſted on for this purpoſe; but it is expected that a miraculous increaſe of theſe funds ſhould immediately follow an edict of the government uſed at the diſcretion of ſome ignorant pariſh officers.

If this clauſe were really and *bona fide* put in execution, and the ſhame attending the receiving of pariſh aſſiſtance worn off, every labouring man might marry as early as he pleaſed, under the certain proſpect of having all his children properly provided for; and as according to the ſuppoſition, there would be no check to population from the conſequences of poverty after marriage, the increaſe of people would be rapid beyond example in old ſtates. After what has been ſaid in the former parts of this work it is ſubmitted to the reader, whether the

utmoſt exertions of the moſt enlightened government could, in this caſe, make the food keep pace with the population, much leſs a mere arbitrary edict, the tendency of which is certainly rather to diminiſh than to increaſe the funds for the maintenance of productive labour.

In the actual circumſtances of every country, the prolific power of nature ſeems to be always ready to exert nearly its full force; but within the limit of poſſibility, there is nothing perhaps more improbable, or more out of the reach of any government to effect, than the direction of the induſtry of its ſubjects in ſuch a manner as to produce the greateſt quantity of human ſuſtenance that the earth could bear. It evidently could not be done without the moſt complete violation of the law of property, from which every thing that is valuable to man has hitherto ariſen. Such is the diſpoſition to marry, particularly in very young people, that if the difficulties of providing for a family were entirely removed, very few would remain ſingle at twenty-two. But what ſtateſman or rational government could propoſe, that all animal food ſhould be prohibited, that no horſes ſhould be uſed for buſineſs or pleaſure, that all the people ſhould

live upon potatoes, and that the whole induſtry of the nation ſhould be exerted in the production of them, except what was neceſſary for the mere neceſſaries of cloathing and houſes. Could ſuch a revolution be effected, would it be deſirable; particularly as in a few years, notwithſtanding all theſe exertions, want, with leſs reſource than ever, would inevitably recur.

After a country has once ceaſed to be in the peculiar ſituation of a new colony, we ſhall always find, that in the actual ſtate of its cultivation, or in that ſtate which may rationally be expected from the moſt enlightened government, the increaſe of its food can never allow for any length of time an unreſtricted increaſe of population; and therefore the due execution of the clauſe in the 43d of Elizabeth, as a permanent law, is a phyſical impoſſibility.

It will be ſaid perhaps, that the fact contradicts the theory, and that the clauſe in queſtion has remained in force, and has been executed during the laſt two hundred years. In anſwer to this I ſhould ſay without heſitation, that it has not really been executed; and that it is merely owing to its incomplete execution, that it remains on our ſtatute book at preſent.

The ſcanty relief granted to perſons in diſ-

treſs, the capricious and inſulting manner in which it is ſometimes diſtributed by the overſeers, and the natural and becoming pride not yet quite extinct among the peaſantry of England, have deterred the more thinking and virtuous part of them from venturing on marriage, without ſome better proſpect of maintaining their families than mere pariſh aſſiſtance. The deſire of bettering our condition and the fear of making it worſe, like the *vis medicatrix naturæ* in phyſicks, is the *vis medicatrix reipublicæ* in politics, and is continually counteracting the diſorders ariſing from narrow human inſtitutions. In ſpite of the prejudices in favour of population, and the direct encouragements to marriage from the poor laws, it operates as a preventive check to increaſe; and happy for this country is it that it does ſo. But beſides that ſpirit of independence and prudence which checks the frequency of marriage notwithſtanding the encouragements of the poor laws, theſe laws themſelves occaſion a check of no inconſiderable magnitude, and thus counteract with one hand what they encourage with the other. As each pariſh is obliged to maintain its own poor, it is naturally fearful of increaſing their number, and every landholder is in conſequence more inclined to

pull

pull down than to build cottages. This deficiency of cottages operates neceſſarily as a ſtrong check to marriage, and this check is probably the principal reaſon why we have been able to continue the ſyſtem of the poor laws ſo long.

Thoſe who are not prevented for a time from marrying by theſe cauſes, are either relieved very ſcantily at their own homes, where they ſuffer all the conſequences ariſing from ſqualid poverty; or they are crowded together in cloſe and unwholeſome workhouſes, where a great mortality almoſt univerſally takes place, particularly among the young children. The dreadful account given by Jonas Hanway of the treatment of pariſh children in London is well known; and it appears from Mr. Howlett and other writers, that in ſome parts of the country their ſituation is not very much better. A great part of the redundant population occaſioned by the poor laws is thus taken off by the operation of the laws themſelves, or at leaſt by their ill execution. The remaining part which ſurvives, by cauſing the funds for the maintenance of labour to be divided among a greater number than can be properly maintained by them, and by turning a conſiderable ſhare from the ſupport

of the diligent and careful workman, to the support of the idle and the negligent, depreſſes the condition of all thoſe who are out of the workhouſes, forces more every year into them, and has ultimately produced the enormous evil which we all ſo juſtly deplore, that of the great and unnatural proportion of the people which is now become dependent upon charity.

If this be a juſt repreſentation of the manner in which the clauſe in queſtion has been executed, and of the effects which it has produced, it muſt be allowed, that we have practiſed an unpardonable deceit upon the poor, and have promiſed what we have been very far from performing. It may be aſſerted without danger of exaggeration, that the poor laws have deſtroyed many more lives than they have preſerved.

The attempts to employ the poor on any great ſcale in manufactures have almoſt invariably failed, and the ſtock and materials have been waſted. In thoſe few pariſhes which, by better management or larger funds, have been enabled to perſevere in this ſyſtem, the effect of theſe new manufactures in the market muſt have been to throw out of employment many independent workmen who were before engaged in fabrications of a ſimilar nature. This effect has been

placed

placed in a ſtrong point of view by Daniel de Foe, in an addreſs to parliament, entitled, *Giving alms no charity*. Speaking of the employment of pariſh children in manufactures, he ſays, For every ſkein of worſted theſe poor children ſpin there muſt be a ſkein the leſs ſpun by ſome poor family that ſpun it before; and for every piece of bays ſo made in London, there muſt be a piece the leſs made at Colcheſter, or ſomewhere elſe[a]. Sir F. M. Eden, on the ſame ſubject, obſerves, that whether mops and brooms are made by pariſh children or by private workmen, no more can be ſold than the public is in want of[b].

[a] See extracts from Daniel de Foe, in Sir F. M. Eden's valuable work on the poor, vol. i. p. 261.

[b] Sir F. Eden, ſpeaking of the ſuppoſed right of the poor to be ſupplied with employment while able to work, and with a maintenance when incapacitated from labour, very juſtly remarks, "It may however be doubted, whether any right, the "gratification of which ſeems to be impracticable, can be "ſaid to exiſt," vol. i. p. 447. No man has collected ſo many materials for forming a judgment on the effects of the poor laws as Sir F. Eden, and the reſult he thus expreſſes. "Upon the whole therefore there ſeems to be juſt grounds "for concluding, that the ſum of good to be expected from a "compulſory maintenance of the poor will be far out-"balanced by the ſum of evil which it will inevitably create," vol. i. p. 467. I am happy to have the ſanction of ſo practical an inquirer to my opinion of the poor laws.

It

It will be ſaid perhaps that the ſame reaſoning might be applied to any new capital brought into competition in a particular trade or manufacture, which can rarely be done without injuring, in ſome degree, thoſe that were engaged in it before. But there is a material difference in the two caſes. In this, the competition is perfectly fair, and what every man on entering into buſineſs muſt lay his account to. He may reſt ſecure that he will not be ſupplanted, unleſs his competitor poſſeſs ſuperior ſkill and induſtry. In the other caſe, the competition is ſupported by a great bounty, by which means, notwithſtanding very inferior ſkill and induſtry on the part of his competitors, the independent workman may be underſold, and unjuſtly excluded from the market. He himſelf perhaps is made to contribute to this competition againſt his own earnings, and the funds for the maintenance of labour are thus turned from the ſupport of a trade which yields a proper profit, to one which cannot maintain itſelf without a bounty. It ſhould be obſerved in general that when a fund for the maintenance of labour is raiſed by aſſeſſment, the greateſt part of it is not a new capital brought into trade, but an old one, which before was much more profitably employed,

employed, turned into a new channel. The farmer pays to the poor's rates for the encouragement of a bad and unprofitable manufacture, what he would have employed on his land with infinitely more advantage to his country. In the one case, the funds for the maintenance of labour are daily diminished; in the other, daily increased. And this obvious tendency of assessments for the employment of the poor, to decrease the real funds for the maintenance of labour in any country, aggravates the absurdity of supposing that it is in the power of a government to find employment for all its subjects, however fast they may increase.

It is not intended that these reasonings should be applied against every mode of employing the poor on a limited scale, and with such restrictions as may not encourage at the same time their increase. I would never wish to push general principles too far, though I think that they ought always to be kept in view. In particular cases, the individual good to be obtained may be so great, and the general evil so slight, that the former may clearly overbalance the latter.

The intention is merely to show, that the poor laws as a general system are founded on a gross errour; and that the common declamation

on

on the ſubject of the poor, which we ſee ſo often in print, and hear continually in converſation, namely, that the market price of labour ought always to be ſufficient decently to ſupport a family, and that employment ought to be found for all thoſe who are willing to work is in effect to ſay, that the funds for the maintenance of labour in this country are not only infinite, but might be made to increaſe with ſuch rapidity, that ſuppoſing us to have at preſent ſix millions of labourers, including their families, we might have 96 millions in another century; or if theſe funds had been properly managed ſince the beginning of the reign of Edward I. ſuppoſing that there were then only two millions of labourers, we might now have poſſeſſed above four million millions of labourers, or about four thouſand times as many labourers as it has been calculated that there are people now on the face of the earth.

CHAP. VII.

Of increaſing Wealth as it affects the Condition of the Poor.

THE profeſſed object of Dr. Smith's inquiry is, the nature and cauſes of the wealth of nations. There is another however perhaps ſtill more intereſting, which he occaſionally mixes with it, the cauſes that affect the happineſs and comfort of the lower orders of ſociety, which in every nation form the moſt numerous claſs. I am ſufficiently aware of the near connexion of theſe two ſubjects, and that generally ſpeaking, the cauſes which contribute to increaſe the wealth of a ſtate tend alſo to increaſe the happineſs of the lower claſſes of the people. But perhaps Dr. Smith has conſidered theſe two inquiries, as ſtill more nearly connected than they really are; at leaſt he has not ſtopped to take notice of thoſe inſtances, where the wealth of a ſociety may increaſe according to his definition of wealth, without having a proportional tendency to increaſe the comforts of the labouring part of it.

I do not mean to enter into any philoſophical

cal diſcuſſion of what conſtitutes the proper happineſs of man, but ſhall merely conſider two univerſally acknowledged ingredients, the command of the neceſſaries and comforts of life, and the poſſeſſion of health.

The comforts of the labouring poor muſt neceſſarily depend upon the funds deſtined for the maintenance of labour; and will generally be in proportion to the rapidity of their increaſe. The demand for labour, which ſuch increaſe occaſions, will of courſe raiſe the value of labour; and till the additional number of hands required are reared, the increaſed funds will be diſtributed to the ſame number of perſons as before, and therefore every labourer will live comparatively at his eaſe. The errour of Dr. Smith lies in repreſenting every increaſe of the revenue or ſtock of a ſociety, as a proportional increaſe of theſe funds. Such ſurplus ſtock or revenue will indeed always be conſidered by the individual poſſeſſing it, as an additional fund from which he may maintain more labour; but with regard to the whole country, it will not be an effectual fund for the maintenance of an additional number of labourers, unleſs part of it be convertible into an additional quantity of proviſions; and it will not be ſo convertible where the increaſe has

ariſen merely from the produce of labour, and not from the produce of land. A diſtinction may in this caſe occur between the number of hands which the ſtock of the ſociety could employ and the number which its territory can maintain.

Dr. Smith defines the wealth of a ſtate to be the annual produce of its land and labour. This definition evidently includes manufactured produce as well as the produce of the land. Now ſuppoſing a nation for a courſe of years to add what it ſaved from its yearly revenue to its manufacturing capital ſolely, and not to its capital employed upon land, it is evident that it might grow richer according to the above definition, without a power of ſupporting a greater number of labourers, and therefore without any increaſe in the real funds for the maintenance of labour. There would notwithſtanding be a demand for labour, from the extenſion of manufacturing capital. This demand would of courſe raiſe the price of labour; but if the yearly ſtock of proviſions in the country were not increaſing, this riſe would ſoon turn out to be merely nominal, as the price of proviſions muſt neceſſarily riſe with it. The demand for manufacturing labourers would probably entice ſome from private

vate ſervice, and ſome even from agriculture; but we will ſuppoſe any effects of this kind on agriculture to be compenſated by improvements in the inſtruments or mode of culture, and the quantity of proviſions therefore to remain the ſame. Improvements in manufacturing machinery would of courſe take place; and this circumſtance, added to the greater number of hands employed in manufactures, would augment conſiderably the annual produce of the labour of the country. The wealth therefore of the country would be increaſing annually, according to the definition, and might not be increaſing very ſlowly*.

The queſtion is, how far wealth increaſing in

* I have ſuppoſed here a caſe which, in a landed nation, I allow to be very improbable in fact; but approximations to it are perhaps not unfrequently taking place. My intention is merely to ſhow, that the funds for the maintenance of labour do not increaſe exactly in proportion to the increaſe in the produce of the land and labour of a country, but with the ſame increaſe of produce, may be more or leſs favourable to the labourer, according as the increaſe has ariſen principally from agriculture or from manufactures. On the ſuppoſition of a phyſical impoſſibility of increaſing the food of a country it is evident, that by improvements in machinery it might grow yearly richer in the exchangeable value of its manufactured produce, but the labourer though he might be better clothed and lodged, could not be better fed.

this

this way, has a tendency to better the condition of the labouring poor. It is a ſelf-evident propoſition, that any general advance in the price of labour, the ſtock of proviſions remaining the ſame, can only be a nominal advance, as it muſt ſhortly be followed by a proportional riſe in proviſions. The increaſe in the price of labour which we have ſuppoſed, would have no permanent effect therefore in giving to the labouring poor a greater command over the neceſſaries of life. In this reſpect they would be nearly in the ſame ſtate as before. In ſome other reſpects they would be in a worſe ſtate. A greater proportion of them would be employed in manufactures, and a ſmaller proportion in agriculture. And this exchange of profeſſions will be allowed, I think, by all to be very unfavourable to health, one eſſential ingredient of happineſs, and to be further diſadvantageous on account of the greater uncertainty of manufacturing labour, ariſing from the capricious taſte of man, the accidents of war, and other cauſes which occaſionally produce very ſevere diſtreſs among the lower claſſes of ſociety. On the ſtate of the poor employed in manufactories, with reſpect to health and other circumſtances which affect their happineſs, I will beg leave to quote a paſ-

ſage from Dr. Aikin's deſcription of the country round Mancheſter.

"The invention and improvements of ma-
" chines to ſhorten labour have had a ſurpriſ-
" ing influence to extend our trade, and alſo to
" call in hands from all parts, eſpecially chil-
" dren for the cotton mills. It is the wiſe plan
" of Providence, that in this life there ſhall be
" no good without its attendant inconvenience.
" There are many which are too obvious in
" theſe cotton mills and ſimilar factories, which
" counteract that increaſe of population uſually
" conſequent on the improved facility of labour.
" In theſe, children of very tender age are em-
" ployed, many of them collected from the
" workhouſes in London and Weſtminſter, and
" tranſported in crowds as apprentices to maſ-
" ters reſident many hundred miles diſtant,
" where they ſerve unknown, unprotected, and
" forgotten by thoſe to whoſe care nature or
" the laws had conſigned them. Theſe chil-
" dren are uſually too long confined to work in
" cloſe rooms, often during the whole night.
" The air they breathe from the oil, &c. em-
" ployed in the machinery, and other circum-
" ſtances, is injurious; little attention is paid
" to their cleanlineſs; and frequent changes
" from

" from a warm and denſe to a cold and thin
" atmoſphere are prediſpoſing cauſes to ſick-
" neſs and diſability, and particularly to the
" epidemic fever which is ſo generally to be
" met with in theſe factories. It is alſo much
" to be queſtioned, if ſociety does not receive
" detriment from the manner in which chil-
" dren are thus employed during their early
" years. They are not generally ſtrong to la-
" bour, or capable of purſuing any other branch
" of buſineſs when the term of their appren-
" ticeſhip expires. The females are wholly
" uninſtructed in ſowing, knitting, and other
" domeſtic affairs, requiſite to make them
" notable and frugal wives and mothers. This
" is a very great misfortune to them and the
" public, as is ſadly proved by a compariſon of
" the families of labourers in huſbandry, and
" thoſe of manufacturers in general. In the
" former we meet with neatneſs, cleanlineſs,
" and comfort; in the latter, with filth, rags,
" and poverty, although their wages may be
" nearly double to thoſe of the huſbandman.
" It muſt be added that the want of early re-
" ligious inſtruction and example, and the nu-
" merous and indiſcriminate aſſociation in theſe

"buildings, are very unfavourable to their fu-
"ture conduct in life [a]."

In addition to the evils mentioned in this paſſage, we all know how ſubject particular manufactures are to fail, from the caprice of taſte, or the accident of war. The weavers of Spitalfields were plunged into the moſt ſevere diſtreſs by the faſhion of muſlins inſtead of ſilks; and numbers of the workmen in Sheffield and Birmingham were for a time thrown out of employment, from the adoption of ſhoe-ſtrings and covered buttons, inſtead of buckles and metal buttons. Our manufactures, taken in the maſs, have increaſed with great rapidity, but in particular places they have failed, and the pariſhes where this has happened are invariably loaded with a crowd of poor in the moſt diſtreſſed and miſerable condition. In the work of Dr. Aikin juſt alluded to, it appears that the regiſter for the collegiate church at Mancheſter, from Chriſtmas 1793 to Chriſtmas 1794, ſtated a decreaſe of 168 marriages, 538 chriſtenings,

[a] P. 219. Endeavours have been made, Dr. Aikin ſays, to remedy theſe evils, and in ſome factories they have been attended with ſucceſs. An act of parliament has of late alſo paſſed on this ſubject, from which it is hoped that much good will reſult.

and

and 250 burials. And in the pariſh of Rochdale in the neighbourhood, a ſtill more melancholy reduction, in proportion to the number of people, took place. In 1792 the births were 746, the burials 646, and the marriages 339. In 1794 the births were 373, the burials 671, and the marriages 199. The cauſe of this ſudden check to population was the commencement of the war, and the failure of commercial credit, which occurred about this time; and ſuch a check could not have taken place in ſo ſudden a manner, without being occaſioned by the moſt ſevere diſtreſs.

Under ſuch circumſtances of ſituation, unleſs the increaſe of the riches of a country from manufactures give the lower claſſes of the ſociety, on an average, a decidedly greater command over the neceſſaries and conveniences of life, it will not appear that their condition is improved.

It will be ſaid perhaps, that the advance in the price of proviſions will immediately turn ſome additional capital into the channel of agriculture, and thus occaſion a much greater produce. But from experience it appears, that this is an effect which ſometimes follows very ſlowly, particularly, if heavy taxes that affect agricul-

tural induſtry, and an advance in the price of labour, had preceded the advance in the price of proviſions.

It may alſo be ſaid, that the additional capital of the nation would enable it to import proviſions ſufficient for the maintenance of thoſe whom its ſtock could employ. A ſmall country with a large navy, and great accommodations for inland carriage, may indeed import and diſtribute an effectual quantity of proviſions; but in large landed nations, if they may be ſo called, an importation adequate at all times to the demand is ſcarcely poſſible.

It ſeems in great meaſure to have eſcaped attention, that a nation which, from its extent of territory and population, muſt neceſſarily ſupport the greater part of its people on the produce of its own ſoil, but which yet in average years draws a ſmall portion of its corn from abroad, is in a much more precarious ſituation, with regard to the conſtancy of its ſupplies, than ſuch ſtates as draw almoſt the whole of their proviſions from other countries. The demands of Holland and Hamburgh may be known with conſiderable accuracy by thoſe who ſupply them. If they increaſe, they increaſe gradually, and are not ſubject from year to year

to

to any great and ſudden variations. But it is otherwiſe with ſuch a country as England. Suppoſing it, in average years, to want about four hundred thouſand quarters of wheat. Such a demand will of courſe be very eaſily ſupplied. But a year of deficient crops occurs, and the demand is ſuddenly two millions of quarters. If the demand had been on an average two millions, it might perhaps have been adequately ſupplied, from the extended agriculture of thoſe countries which are in the habit of exporting corn: but we cannot expect that it can eaſily be anſwered thus ſuddenly; and indeed we know from experience that an unuſual demand of this nature, in a nation capable of paying for it, cannot exiſt, without raiſing the price of wheat very conſiderably in all the ports of Europe. Hamburgh, Holland, and the ports of the Baltic, felt very ſenſibly the high prices of England during the late ſcarcity; and I have been informed from very good authority, that the price of bread in New York was little inferior to the higheſt price in London.

A nation poſſeſſed of a large territory is unavoidably ſubject to this uncertainty in its means of ſubſiſtence, when the commercial part of its population is either equal to or has increaſed

beyond the ſurplus produce of its cultivators. No reſerve being in theſe caſes left in exportation, the full effect of every deficiency from unfavourable ſeaſons muſt neceſſarily be felt; and though the riches of ſuch a country may enable it for a certain period to continue raiſing the nominal price of wages, ſo as to give the lower claſſes of the ſociety a power of purchaſing imported corn at a high price; yet, as a ſudden demand can very ſeldom be fully anſwered, the competition in the market will invariably raiſe the price of proviſions, in full proportion to the advance in the price of labour; the lower claſſes will be but little relieved; and the dearth will operate ſeverely throughout all the ranks of ſociety.

According to the natural order of things, years of ſcarcity muſt occaſionally recur in all landed nations. They ought always therefore to enter into our conſideration; and the proſperity of any country may juſtly be conſidered as precarious, in which the funds for the maintenance of labour are liable to great and ſudden fluctuations from every unfavourable variation in the ſeaſons.

But putting, for the preſent, years of ſcarcity out of the queſtion; when the commercial population

pulation of any country increaſes ſo much beyond the ſurplus produce of the cultivators, that the demand for imported corn is not eaſily ſupplied, and the price riſes in proportion to the price of wages, no further increaſe of riches will have any tendency to give the labourer a greater command over the neceſſaries of life. In the progreſs of wealth this will naturally take place; either from the largeneſs of the ſupply wanted; the increaſed diſtance from which it is brought, and conſequently the increaſed expenſe of importation; the greater conſumption of it in the countries in which it is uſually purchaſed; or what muſt unavoidably happen, the neceſſity of a greater diſtance of inland carriage in theſe countries. Such a nation, by increaſing induſtry, and increaſing ingenuity in the improvement of machinery, may ſtill go on increaſing the yearly quantity of its manufactured produce; but its funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently its population, will be perfectly ſtationary. This point is the natural limit to the population of all commercial ſtates[a]. In countries

[a] Sir James Steuart's Political Œconomy, vol. i. b. i. c. xviii. p. 119. It is probable that Holland before the revolution had nearly reached this point, not ſo much however from

countries at a great diſtance from this limit, an effect approaching to what has been here deſcribed will take place whenever the march of commerce and manufactures is more rapid than that of agriculture. During the laſt ten or twelve years it cannot be doubted, that the annual produce of the land and labour of England has very rapidly increaſed, and in conſequence the nominal wages of labour have greatly increaſed; but the real recompenſe of the labourer, though increaſed, has not increaſed in proportion.

That every increaſe of the ſtock or revenue of a nation cannot be conſidered as an increaſe of the real funds for the maintenance of labour, and therefore cannot have the ſame good effect upon the condition of the poor, will appear in a ſtrong light if the argument be applied to China.

Dr. Smith obſerves, that China has probably long been as rich as the nature of her laws and inſtitutions will admit; but that, with other laws and inſtitutions, and if foreign commerce

from the difficulty of obtaining more foreign corn, but from the very heavy taxes which were impoſed on this firſt neceſſary of life. All the great landed nations of Europe are certainly at a conſiderable diſtance from this point at preſent.

were

were held in honour ſhe might ſtill be much richer. The queſtion is, would ſuch an increaſe of wealth be an increaſe of the real funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently tend to place the lower claſſes of people in China in a ſtate of greater plenty?

If trade and foreign commerce were held in great honour in China, it is evident, that from the great number of labourers, and the cheapneſs of labour, ſhe might work up manufactures for foreign ſale to an immenſe amount. It is equally evident, that from the great bulk of proviſions, and the amazing extent of her inland territory, ſhe could not in return import ſuch a quantity as would be any ſenſible addition to the annual ſtock of ſubſiſtence in the country. Her immenſe amount of manufactures therefore ſhe would exchange chiefly for luxuries collected from all parts of the world. At preſent it appears that no labour whatever is ſpared in the production of food. The country is rather overpeopled in proportion to what its ſtock can employ, and labour is therefore ſo abundant that no pains are taken to abridge it. The conſequence of this is probably the greateſt production of food that the ſoil can poſſibly afford; for it will be generally obſerved, that pro-

ceſſes for abridging agricultural labour, though they may enable a farmer to bring a certain quantity of grain cheaper to market, tend rather to diminiſh than increaſe the whole produce. An immenſe capital could not be employed in China in preparing manufactures for foreign trade, without taking off ſo many labourers from agriculture, as to alter this ſtate of things, and in ſome degree, to diminiſh the produce of the country. The demand for manufacturing labourers would naturally raiſe the price of labour; but as the quantity of ſubſiſtence would not be increaſed, the price of proviſions would keep pace with it, or even more than keep pace with it, if the quantity of proviſions were really decreaſing. The country would however be evidently advancing in wealth; the exchangeable value of the annual produce of its land and labour would be annually augmented; yet the real funds for the maintenance of labour would be ſtationary or even declining; and conſequently the increaſing wealth of the nation would tend rather to depreſs than to raiſe the condition of the poor[a]. With regard

[a] The condition of the poor in China is, indeed, very miſerable at preſent; but this is not owing to their want of foreign

gard to the command over the neceſſaries of life they would be in the ſame or rather worſe ſtate than before; and a great part of them would have exchanged the healthy labours of agriculture for the unhealthy occupations of manufacturing induſtry.

The argument perhaps appears clearer when applied to China, becauſe it is generally allowed that its wealth has been long ſtationary, and its ſoil cultivated nearly to the utmoſt. With regard to any other country it might always be a matter of diſpute, at which of the two periods compared, wealth was increaſing the faſteſt, as it is upon the rapidity of the increaſe of wealth at any particular period, that, Dr. Smith ſays, the condition of the poor depends. It is evident however, that two nations might increaſe exactly with the ſame rapidity in the exchangeable value of the annual produce of their land and labour; yet, if one had applied itſelf chiefly to agriculture, and the other chiefly to com-

foreign commerce, but to their extreme tendency to marriage and increaſe; and if this tendency were to continue the ſame, the only way in which the introduction of a greater number of manufacturers could poſſibly make the lower claſſes of people richer, would be by increaſing the mortality amongſt them, which is certainly not a very deſirable mode of growing rich.

merce,

merce, the funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently the effect of the increaſe of wealth in each nation, would be extremely different. In that which had applied itſelf chiefly to agriculture the poor would live in greater plenty, and population would rapidly increaſe. In that which had applied itſelf chiefly to commerce the poor would be comparatively but little benefited, and conſequently population would either be ſtationary or increaſe very ſlowly[a].

[a] The condition of the labouring poor, ſuppoſing their habits to remain the ſame, cannot be very eſſentially improved but by giving them a greater command over the means of ſubſiſtence. But any advantage of this kind muſt from its nature be temporary, and is therefore really of leſs value to them than any permanent change in their habits. But manufactures by inſpiring a taſte for comforts, tend to promote a favourable change in theſe habits, and in this way perhaps counterbalance all their diſadvantages. The labouring claſſes of ſociety in nations merely agricultural are generally on the whole poorer than in manufacturing nations, though leſs ſubject to thoſe occaſional variations which among manufacturers often produce the moſt ſevere diſtreſs. But the conſiderations which relate to a change of habits in the poor belong more properly to a ſubſequent part of this work.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Definitions of Wealth. Agricultural and Commercial Syſtems.

THERE are none of the definitions of the wealth of a ſtate that are not liable to ſome objections. If we take the groſs produce of the land it is evident, that the funds for the maintenance of labour, the population, and the wealth, may increaſe very rapidly, while the nation is apparently poor, and has very little diſpoſeable revenue. If we take Dr. Smith's definition, wealth may increaſe, as has before been ſhown, without tending to increaſe the funds for the maintenance of labour and the population. If we take the clear ſurplus produce of the land, according to the Economiſts, in this caſe the funds for the maintenance of labour and the population may increaſe, without an increaſe of wealth, as in the inſtance of the cultivation of new lands, which will pay a profit but not a rent; and *vice verſa*, wealth may increaſe without increaſing the funds for the maintenance

maintenance of labour, and the population, as in the inſtance of improvements in agricultural inſtruments, and in the mode of agriculture, which may make the land yield the ſame produce, with fewer perſons employed upon it; and conſequently the diſpoſeable wealth or revenue would be increaſed without a power of ſupporting a greater number of people.

The objections however to the two laſt definitions do not prove that they are incorrect; but merely that an increaſe of wealth, though generally, is not neceſſarily and invariably accompanied by an increaſe of the funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently by the power of ſupporting a greater number of people, or of enabling the former number to live in greater plenty and happineſs.

Whichever of theſe two definitions is adopted as the beſt criterion of the wealth, power, and proſperity of a ſtate, the poſition of the Economiſts will always remain true, that the ſurplus produce of the cultivators is the great fund which ultimately pays all thoſe who are not employed upon the land. Throughout the whole world the number of manufacturers, of proprietors, and of perſons engaged in the various civil and military profeſſions, muſt be exactly

exactly proportioned to this ſurplus produce, and cannot in the nature of things increaſe beyond it. If the earth had been ſo niggardly of her produce as to oblige all her inhabitants to labour for it, no manufacturers or idle perſons could ever have exiſted. But her firſt intercourſe with man was a voluntary preſent, not very large indeed, but ſufficient as a fund for his ſubſiſtence, till by the proper exerciſe of his faculties he could procure a greater. In proportion as the labour and ingenuity of man exerciſed upon the land, have increaſed this ſurplus produce, leiſure has been given to a greater number of perſons to employ themſelves in all the inventions which embelliſh civilized life. And though, in its turn, the deſire to profit by theſe inventions has greatly contributed to ſtimulate the cultivators to increaſe their ſurplus produce; yet the order of precedence is clearly the ſurplus produce; becauſe the funds for the ſubſiſtence of the manufacturer muſt be advanced to him before he can complete his work: and if we were to imagine, that we could command this ſurplus produce, whenever we willed it, by forcing manufactures, we ſhould be quickly admoniſhed of our groſs errour, by the inadequate ſupport which the workman would

receive, in ſpite of any riſe that might take place in his nominal wages. If in aſſerting the peculiar productiveneſs of labour employed upon land, we look only to the clear monied rent yielded to a certain number of proprietors, we undoubtedly conſider the ſubject in a very contracted point of view. The quantity of the ſurplus produce of the cultivators is indeed in part meaſured by this clear rent, but its real value conſiſts in its affording the means of ſubſiſtence, and the materials of cloathing and lodging to a certain number of people, according to its extent, ſome of whom may live without manual exertions, and others employ themſelves in modifying the raw materials of nature into the forms beſt ſuited to the gratification of man.

A clear monied revenue, ariſing from manufactures, of the ſame extent, and to the ſame number of individuals, would by no means be accompanied by the ſame circumſtances. It would throw the country in which it exiſted into an abſolute dependance for food and materials on the ſurplus produce of other nations, and if this foreign ſupply were by any accident to fail, the revenue would immediately ceaſe.

The ſkill to modify the raw materials produced

duced from the land would be abſolutely of no value, and the individuals poſſeſſing it would immediately periſh, if theſe raw materials, and the food neceſſary to ſupport thoſe who are working them up could not be obtained; but if the materials and the food were ſecure, it would be eaſy to find the ſkill ſufficient to render them of conſiderable value.

According to the ſyſtem of the Economiſts, manufactures are an object on which revenue is ſpent, and not any part of the revenue itſelf[a]. But though from this deſcription of manufactures, and the epithet ſterile ſometimes applied to them, they ſeem rather to be degraded by the terms of the Economiſts, it is a very great

[a] Even upon this ſyſtem there is one point of view in which manufactures appear greatly to add to the riches of a ſtate. The uſe of a revenue, according to the Economiſts, is to be ſpent; and a great part of it will of courſe be ſpent in manufactures. But if by the judicious employment of manufacturing capital, theſe commodities grow conſiderably cheaper, the ſurplus produce becomes proportionably of ſo much greater value, and the real revenue of the nation is virtually increaſed. If this view of the ſubject do not, in the eyes of the Economiſts, completely juſtify Dr. Smith in calling manufacturing labour *productive*, in the ſtrict ſenſe of that term, it muſt fully warrant all the pains he has taken in explaining the nature and effects of commercial capital, and of the diviſion of manufacturing labour.

errour to ſuppoſe that their ſyſtem is really unfavourable to them. On the contrary, I am diſpoſed to believe, that it is the only ſyſtem by which commerce and manufactures can prevail to a very great extent, without bringing with them at the ſame time the ſeeds of their own ruin. Before the late revolution in Holland, the high price of the neceſſaries of life had deſtroyed many of its manufactures[a]. Monopolies are always ſubject to be broken; and even the advantage of capital and machinery, which may yield extraordinary profits for a time, is liable to be greatly leſſened by the competition of other nations. In the hiſtory of the world, the nations whoſe wealth has been derived principally from manufactures and commerce, have been perfectly ephemeral beings, compared with thoſe, the baſis of whoſe wealth has been agriculture. It is in the nature of things that a ſtate which ſubſiſts upon a revenue furniſhed by other countries, muſt be infinitely more expoſed to all the accidents of time and chance, than one which produces its own.

No errour is more frequent than that of miſtaking effects for cauſes. We are ſo blinded by the ſhowineſs of commerce and manufac-

[a] Smith's Wealth of Nations, vol. iii. b. v. c. ii. p. 392.

tures,

tures, as to believe, that they are almoſt the ſole cauſe of the wealth, power, and proſperity of England. But perhaps they may be more juſtly conſidered as the conſequences than the cauſe of this wealth. According to the definition of the Economiſts, which conſiders only the produce of land, England is the richeſt country in Europe in proportion to her ſize. Her ſyſtem of agriculture is beyond compariſon better, and conſequently her ſurplus produce is more conſiderable. France is very greatly ſuperior to England in extent of territory and population; but when the ſurplus produce, or diſpoſeable revenue of the two nations are compared, the ſuperiority of France almoſt vaniſhes. And it is this great ſurplus produce in England, ariſing from her agriculture, which enables her to ſupport ſuch a vaſt body of manufacturers, ſuch formidable fleets and armies, ſuch a crowd of perſons engaged in the liberal profeſſions, and a proportion of the ſociety living on money rents very far beyond what has ever been known in any other country of the world. According to the returns lately made of the population of England and Wales, it appears that the number of perſons employed in agriculture is conſiderably leſs than a fifth part of the whole. There

is reaſon to believe that the claſſifications in theſe returns are incorrect; but making very great allowances for errours of this nature, it can ſcarcely admit of a doubt that the number of perſons employed in agriculture is very unuſually ſmall in proportion to the actual produce. Of late years indeed the part of the ſociety, not connected with agriculture, has unfortunately increaſed beyond this produce; but the average importation of corn, as yet, bears but a ſmall proportion to that which is grown in the country, and conſequently the power which England poſſeſſes of ſupporting ſo vaſt a body of idle conſumers muſt be attributed principally to the greatneſs of her ſurplus produce.

It will be ſaid that it was her commerce and manufactures which encouraged her cultivators to obtain this great ſurplus produce, and therefore indirectly, if not directly, created it. That commerce and manufactures produce this effect in a great degree is true; but that they ſometimes produce a contrary effect when carried to exceſs, is equally true. Undoubtedly agriculture cannot flouriſh without a vent for its commodities, either at home or abroad; but when this want has been adequately ſupplied, the intereſts of agriculture demand nothing more.

When

When too great a part of a nation is engaged in commerce and manufactures, it is a clear proof that, either from undue encouragement, or from other particular cauſes, a capital is employed in this way to much greater advantage than in domeſtic agriculture; and under ſuch circumſtances, it is impoſſible that the land ſhould not be robbed of much of the capital which would naturally have fallen to its ſhare. Dr. Smith juſtly obſerves, that the navigation act, and the monoply of the colony trade, neceſſarily forced into a particular and not very advantageous channel, a greater proportion of the capital of Great Britain than would otherwiſe have gone to it; and by thus taking capital from other employments, and at the ſame time univerſally raiſing the rate of Britiſh mercantile profit, diſcouraged the improvement of the land[a]. If the improvement of land, he goes on to ſay, affords a greater capital than what can be drawn from an equal capital in any mercantile employment, the land will draw capital from mercantile employments. If the profit be leſs, mercantile employments will draw capital from the improvement of land. The monopoly therefore, by raiſing the rate of

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. vii. p. 435.

Britiſh mercantile profit, and thus diſcouraging agricultural improvement, has neceſſarily retarded the natural increaſe of a great original ſource of revenue, the rent of land[a].

The Eaſt and Weſt Indies are indeed ſo great an object, and afford employment with high profits, to ſo great a capital, that it is impoſſible that they ſhould not draw capital from other employments, and particularly from the cultivation of the ſoil, the profits upon which in general are very ſmall.

All corporations, patents, and excluſive privileges of every kind, which abound ſo much in the mercantile ſyſtem, have in proportion to their extent the ſame effect. And the experience of the laſt twenty years ſeems to warrant us in concluding, that the high price of proviſions ariſing from the abundance of commercial wealth, accompanied as it has been by very great variations, and by a great riſe in the price of labour, does not operate as an encouragement to agriculture ſufficient to make it keep pace with the rapid ſtrides of commerce.

It will be ſaid perhaps, that land is always improved by the redundancy of commercial capital. But this effect is late and ſlow, and in

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. vii. p. 436.

the

the nature of things cannot operate powerfully, till this capital is really redundant, which it never is, while the intereſt of money and the profits of mercantile ſtock are high. We cannot look forwards to any conſiderable effect of this kind till the intereſt of money ſinks to 3 per cent. When men can get 5 or 6 per cent. for their money, without any trouble, they will hardly venture a capital upon land, where, including riſks, and the profits upon their own labour and attendance, they may not get much more. Wars and loans, as far as internal circumſtances are concerned, impede but little the progreſs of thoſe branches of commerce where the profits of ſtock are high; but affect very conſiderably the increaſe of that more eſſential and permanent ſource of wealth, the improvement of the land. It is in this point, I am inclined to believe, that the national debt of England has been moſt injurious to her. By abſorbing the redundancy of commercial capital, and keeping up the rate of intereſt, it has prevented this capital from overflowing upon the ſoil. And a large mortgage[a] has thus been eſtabliſhed

[a] The principal errour of the French economiſts appears to be on the ſubject of taxation. Admitting that the ſurplus produce

eſtabliſhed on the lands of England, the intereſt of which is drawn from the payment of productive

produce of the land is the fund which pays every thing beſides the food of the cultivators; yet it ſeems to be a miſtake to ſuppoſe that the owners of land are the ſole proprietors of this ſurplus produce. It appears to me, that every man who has realized a capital in money has virtually a mortgage on the land for a certain portion of the ſurplus produce; and as long as the conditions of this mortgage remain unaltered (and the taxes which affect him only in the character of a conſumer, do not alter theſe conditions) the mortgagee pays a tax in the ſame manner as the landholder, finally. As conſumers indeed it cannot be doubted, that even thoſe who live upon the profits of ſtock and the wages of labour, particularly of profeſſional labour, pay ſome taxes on neceſſaries for a very conſiderable time, and many on luxuries permanently; becauſe the conſumption of individuals who poſſeſs large ſhares of the wealth which is paid in profits and wages, may be curtailed and turned into another channel, without impeding, in any degree, the continuance of the ſame quantity of ſtock, or the production of the ſame quantity of labour.

The real ſurplus produce of this country, or all the produce not actually conſumed by the cultivators, is a very different thing, and ſhould carefully be diſtinguiſhed from the ſum of the net rents of the landlords. This ſum, it is ſuppoſed, does not much exceed a fifth part of the groſs produce. The remaining four fifths is certainly not conſumed by the labourers and horſes employed in agriculture; but a very conſiderable portion of it is paid by the farmer in tithes, in taxes, in the inſtruments of agriculture, and in the manufactures uſed in his own family, and in the families of his labourers.

It

tive labour, and dedicated to the ſupport of idle conſumers.

It

It is in this manner that a kind of mortgage is ultimately eſtabliſhed on the land, by taxes, and the progreſs of commercial wealth; and in this ſenſe, all taxes may be ſaid to fall wholly upon the land, though not wholly on the landholders. It ſeems a little hard therefore, in taxing ſurplus produce, to make the landlords pay for what they do not receive. At the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed, that independently of theſe conſiderations which makes a land tax partial, it is the beſt of all taxes, as it is the only one which does not tend to raiſe the price of commodities. Taxes on conſumption by which alone monied revenues can be reached, without an income tax, neceſſarily raiſe all prices to a degree greatly injurious to a country.

A land tax, or tax upon net rent, has little or no effect in diſcouraging the improvement of land, as many have ſuppoſed. It is only a tithe, or a tax, in proportion to the groſs produce which does this. No man in his ſenſes will be deterred from getting a clear profit of 20l. inſtead of 10l. becauſe he is always to pay a fourth or fifth of his clear gains; but when he is to pay a tax in proportion to his groſs produce, which in the caſe of capital laid out in improvements is ſcarcely ever accompanied with a proportional increaſe of his clear gains, it is a very different thing, and muſt neceſſarily impede, in a great degree, the progreſs of cultivation. I am aſtoniſhed, that ſo obvious and eaſy a commutation for tithes as a land tax on improved rents has not been adopted. Such a tax would be paid by the ſame perſons as before, only in a better form; and the change would not be felt, except in the advantage that would accrue to all the parties concerned, the landlord, the tenant, and the clergyman. Tithes undoubtedly

operate

It muſt be allowed therefore, upon the whole, that our commerce has not done ſo much for our agriculture as our agriculture has for our commerce; and that the improved ſyſtem of cultivation which has taken place, in ſpite of conſiderable diſcouragements, creates yearly a ſurplus produce, which enables the country, with but little aſſiſtance, to ſupport ſo vaſt a body of people engaged in purſuits unconnected with the land.

operate as a high bounty on paſture, and a great diſcouragement to tillage, which in the preſent peculiar circumſtances of the country is a very great diſadvantage.

CHAP. IX.

Different Effects of the Agricultural and Commercial Syſtems.

About the middle of the laſt century we were genuinely, and in the ſtrict ſenſe of the Econoſhiſts, an agricultural nation. Our commerce and manufactures were however then in a very reſpectable and thriving ſtate; and if they had continued to bear the ſame relative proportion to our agriculture, they would evidently have gone on increaſing conſiderably, with the improving cultivation of the country. There is no apparent limit to the quantity of manufactures which might in time be ſupported in this way. The increaſing wealth of a country in ſuch a ſtate ſeems to be out of the reach of all common accidents. There is no diſcoverable germ of decay in the ſyſtem; and in theory there is no reaſon to ſay that it might not go on increaſing in wealth and proſperity for thouſands of years.

We have now however ſtepped out of the agricultural

agricultural ſyſtem, into a ſtate in which the commercial ſyſtem clearly predominates; and there is but too much reaſon to fear that even our commerce and manufactures will ultimately feel the diſadvantage of the change. It has been already obſerved that we are exactly in the ſituation in which a country feels moſt fully the effect of thoſe common years of deficient crops, which in the natural courſe of things are to be expected. The competition of increaſing commercial wealth, operating upon a ſupply of corn not increaſing in the ſame proportion, muſt at all times tend to raiſe the nominal price of labour; but when ſcarce years are taken into the conſideration, its effect in this way muſt ultimately be very great. During the late ſcarcities the price of labour has been continually riſing, and it will not readily fall again. In every country there will be many cauſes, which, in practice, operating like friction in mechanics, prevent the price of labour from riſing and falling exactly in proportion to the price of its component parts. But beſides theſe cauſes, there is one very powerful cauſe in theory, which operates to prevent the price of labour from falling when once it has been raiſed. Suppoſing it to be raiſed by a temporary cauſe, ſuch

ſuch as a ſcarcity of proviſions, it is evident that it will not fall again, unleſs ſome kind of ſtagnation take place in the competition among the purchaſers of labour; but the power which the increaſe of the real price of labour, on the return of plenty, gives to the labourer of purchaſing a greater quantity both of rude and manufactured produce, tends to prevent this ſtagnation, and ſtrongly to counteract that fall in the price which would otherwiſe take place.

Labour is a commodity the price of which will not be ſo readily affected by the price of its component parts as any other. The reaſon why the conſumer pays a tax on any commodity, or an advance in the price of any of its component parts, is, becauſe if he cannot or will not pay this advance of price, the commodity will not be produced in the ſame quantity, and the next year there will be only ſuch a proportion in the market as is accommodated to the number of perſons that will conſent to pay the advance. But in the caſe of labour, the operation of withdrawing the commodity is much ſlower and more painful. Although the purchaſers refuſe to pay the advanced price, the ſame ſupply will neceſſarily remain in the market, not only the next year, but for ſome years

years to come. Conſequently, if no increaſe take place in the demand, and the tax or advance in the price of proviſions be not ſo great as to make it immediately obvious that the labourer cannot ſupport his family, it is probable, that he will continue to pay this advance, till a relaxation in the rate of the increaſe of population cauſes the market to be under ſupplied with labour, and then of courſe the competition among the purchaſers will raiſe the price above the proportion of the advance, in order to reſtore the neceſſary ſupply. In the ſame manner, if an advance in the price of labour take place during two or three years of ſcarcity, it is probable that on the return of plenty, the real recompenſe of labour will continue higher than the uſual average, till a too rapid increaſe of population cauſes a competition among the labourers, and a conſequent diminution of the price of labour below the uſual rate.

When a country in average years grows more corn than it conſumes, and is in the habit of exporting a part of it, thoſe great variations of price which from the competition of commercial wealth often produce laſting effects, cannot occur to the ſame extent. The wages of labour can never riſe very much above the com-

mon price in other commercial countries; and under ſuch circumſtances, England would have nothing to fear from the fulleſt and moſt open competition. The increaſing proſperity of other countries would only open to her a more extenſive market for her commodities, and give additional ſpirit to all her commercial tranſactions.

The high price of corn and of rude produce in general, as far as it is occaſioned by the freeſt competition among the nations of Europe, is a very great advantage, and is the beſt poſſible encouragement to agriculture; but when occaſioned merely by the competition of monied wealth at home, its effect is different. In the one caſe, a great encouragement is given to production in general, and the more is produced the better. In the other caſe, the produce is neceſſarily confined to the home conſumption. The cultivators are juſtly afraid of growing too much corn, as a conſiderable loſs will be ſuſtained upon that part of it which is ſold abroad; and a glut in the home market will univerſally make the price fall below the fair and proper recompence to the grower. It is impoſſible that a country under ſuch circumſtances ſhould not

be ſubject to great and frequent variations in the price of corn.

If we were to endeavour to lower the price of labour by encouraging the importation of foreign corn, we ſhould probably aggravate the evil tenfold. Experience warrants us in ſaying, that the fall in the price of labour would be ſlow and uncertain; but the decline of our agriculture would be certain. The Britiſh grower of corn could not, in his own markets, ſtand the competition of the foreign grower, in average years. Arable lands of a moderate quality would hardly pay the expence of cultivation. Rich ſoils alone would yield a rent. Round all our towns the appearances would be the ſame as uſual; but in the interior of the country, much of the land would be neglected, and almoſt univerſally, where it was practicable, paſture would take place of tillage. This ſtate of things would continue, till the equilibrium was reſtored, either by the fall of Britiſh rent and wages, or an advance in the price of foreign corn, or, what is more probable, by the union of both cauſes. But a period would have elapſed of conſiderable relative encouragement to manufactures, and relative diſcouragement to agriculture.

culture. A certain portion of capital would be taken from the land, and when the equilibrium was at length reſtored, the nation would probably be found dependant upon foreign ſupplies for a great portion of her ſubſiſtence; and unleſs ſome particular cauſe were to occaſion a foreign demand greater than the home demand, her independence, in this reſpect, could not be recovered. During this period even her commerce and manufactures would be in a moſt precarious ſtate; and circumſtances by no means improbable in the preſent ſtate of Europe might reduce her population within the limits of her reduced cultivation[a].

In the natural courſe of things, a country

[a] Though it be true that the high price of labour or taxes on agricultural capital ultimately fall on the rent, yet we muſt by no means throw out of our conſideration the current leaſes. In the courſe of twenty years, I am inclined to believe, that the ſtate of agriculture in any country might be very flouriſhing, or very much the reverſe, according as the current leaſes had tended to encourage or diſcourage improvement. A general fall in the rent of land would be preceded by a period moſt unfavourable to the inveſtment of agricultural capital; and conſequently every tax which affects agricultural capital is peculiarly pernicious. Taxes which affect capitals in trade are almoſt immediately ſhifted off on the conſumer; but taxes which affect agricultural capital fall, during the current leaſes, wholly on the farmer.

which depends for a conſiderable part of its ſupply of corn upon its poorer neighbours, may expect to ſee this ſupply gradually diminiſh, as theſe countries increaſe in riches and population, and have leſs ſurplus of their rude produce to ſpare.

The political relations of ſuch a country may expoſe it, during a war, to have that part of its ſupplies of proviſions which it derives from foreign ſtates ſuddenly ſtopped, or greatly diminiſhed; an event which could not take place without producing the moſt calamitous effects.

A nation in which commercial wealth predominates has an abundance of all thoſe articles which form the principal conſumption of the rich, but is expoſed to be ſtraightened in its ſupplies of that article, which is abſolutely neceſſary to all, and in which by far the greateſt portion of the revenue of the induſtrious claſſes is expended.

A nation in which agricultural wealth predominates, though it may not produce at home ſuch a ſurplus of luxuries and conveniences as the commercial nation, and may therefore be expoſed poſſibly to ſome want of theſe commodities, has, on the other hand, a ſurplus of that article which is eſſential to the well being of

the

the whole ſtate, and is therefore ſecure from want in what is of the greateſt importance.

And if we cannot be ſo ſure of the ſupply of what we derive from others, as of what we produce at home, it ſeems to be an advantageous policy in a nation, whoſe territory will allow of it, to ſecure a ſurplus of that commodity, a deficiency of which would ſtrike moſt deeply at its happineſs and proſperity.

It has been almoſt univerſally acknowledged, that there is no branch of trade more profitable to a country, even in a commercial point of view, than the ſale of rude produce. In general its value bears a much greater proportion to the expence incurred in procuring it, than that of any other commodity whatever, and the national profit on its ſale is in conſequence greater. This is often noticed by Dr. Smith; but in combating the arguments of the Economiſts, he ſeems for a moment to forget it, and to ſpeak of the ſuperior advantage of exporting manufactures.

He obſerves, that a trading and manufacturing country exports what can ſubſiſt and accommodate but very few, and imports the ſubſiſtence and accommodation of a great number. The other exports the ſubſiſtence and accom-

modation of a great number, and imports that of a very few only. The inhabitants of the one muſt always enjoy a much greater quantity of ſubſiſtence than what their own lands in the actual ſtate of their cultivation could afford. The inhabitants of the other muſt always enjoy a much ſmaller quantity [a].

In this paſſage he does not ſeem to argue with his uſual accuracy. Though the manufacturing nation may export a commodity which, in its actual ſhape, can only ſubſiſt and accomodate a very few; yet it muſt be recollected, that in order to prepare this commodity for exportation, a conſiderable part of the revenue of the country had been employed in ſubſiſting and accommodating a great number of workmen. And with regard to the ſubſiſtence and accommodation which the other nation exports, whether it be of a great or a ſmall number, it is certainly no more than ſufficient to replace the ſubſiſtence that had been conſumed in the manufacturing nation, together with the profits of the maſter manufacturer and merchant, which, probably, are not ſo great as the profits of the farmer and the merchant in the agricultural nation. And though it may be true that the

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. iii. b. iv. c. ix. p. 29.

inhabitants

inhabitants of the manufacturing nation enjoy a greater quantity of ſubſiſtence than what their own lands in the actual ſtate of their cultivation could afford; yet an inference in favour of the manufacturing ſyſtem by no means follows, becauſe the adoption of the one or the other ſyſtem will make the greateſt difference in their actual ſtate of cultivation. If, during the courſe of a century, two landed nations were to purſue theſe two different ſyſtems, that is, if one of them were regularly to export manufactures, and import ſubſiſtence; and the other to export ſubſiſtence, and import manufactures, there would be no compariſon at the end of the period between the ſtate of cultivation in the two countries; and no doubt could rationally be entertained that the country which exported its raw produce, would be able to ſubſiſt and accommodate a much greater population than the other.

In the ordinary courſe of things, the exportation of corn is ſufficiently profitable to the individuals concerned in it. But with regard to national advantage, there are four very ſtrong reaſons why it is to be preferred to any other kind of export. In the firſt place, corn pays from its own funds the expences of procuring

it, and the whole of what is ſold is a clear national profit. If I ſet up a new manufacture, the perſons employed in it muſt be ſupported out of the funds of ſubſiſtence already exiſting in the country, the value of which muſt be deducted from the price for which the commodity is ſold, before we can eſtimate the clear national profit. But if I cultivate freſh land, or employ more men in the improvement of what was before cultivated, I increaſe the general funds of ſubſiſtence in the country. With a part of this increaſe I ſupport all the additional perſons employed, and the whole of the remainder which is exported and ſold is a clear national gain; beſides the advantage to the country, of ſupporting an additional population equal to the additional number of perſons ſo employed, without the ſlighteſt tendency to diminiſh the plenty of the reſt.

Secondly, in all wrought commodities, the ſame quantity of capital, ſkill, and labour, employed, will produce the ſame or very nearly the ſame quantity of complete manufacture. But owing to the variations of the ſeaſons, the ſame quantity of capital, ſkill, and labour in huſbandry may produce in different years very different quantities of corn. Conſequently, if the two commodities

commodities were equally valuable to man, from the greater probability of the occaſional failure of corn than of manufactures, it would be of more conſequence to have an average ſurplus of the former than of the latter.

Thirdly, corn being an article of the moſt abſolute neceſſity, in compariſon with which all others will be ſacrificed, a deficiency of it muſt neceſſarily produce a much greater advance of price than a deficiency of any other kind of produce; and as the price of corn influences the price of ſo many other commodities, the evil effects of a deficiency will not only be more ſevere and more general, but more laſting, than the effects of a deficiency in any other commodity.

Fourthly, there appear to be but three ways of rendering the ſupplies of corn in a particular country more equable, and of preventing the evil effects of thoſe deficiences from unfavourable ſeaſons, which in the natural courſe of things muſt be expected occaſionally to recur. Theſe are, 1. An immediate ſupply from foreign nations, as ſoon as the ſcarcity occurs. 2. Large public granaries. 3. The habitual growth of a quantity of corn for a more extended market than

than the average home consumption affords. Of the first, experience has convinced us that the suddenness of the demand prevents it from being effectual. To the second, it is acknowledged by all, that these are very great and weighty objections. There remains then only the third.

These considerations seem to make it a point of the first consequence to the happiness and permanent prosperity of any country, to be able to carry on the export trade of corn as one considerable branch of its commercial transactions.

But how to give this ability, how to turn a nation from the habit of importing corn to the habit of exporting it, is the great difficulty. It has been generally acknowledged, and is frequently noticed by Dr. Smith, that the policy of modern Europe has led it to encourage the industry of the towns more than the industry of the country, or, in other words, trade more than agriculture. In this policy, England has certainly not been behind the rest of Europe; perhaps indeed, except in one instance[a], it may be said that she has been the foremost. If

[a] The bounty on the exportation of corn.

things

things had been left to take their natural courſe, there is no reaſon to think, that the commercial part of the ſociety would have increaſed beyond the ſurplus produce of the cultivators; but the high profits of commerce from monopolies, and other peculiar encouragements, have altered this natural courſe of things; and the body politic is in an artificial, and in ſome degree diſeaſed ſtate, with one of its principal members out of proportion to the reſt. Almoſt all medicine is in itſelf bad; and one of the great evils of illneſs is the neceſſity of taking it. No perſon can well be more averſe to medicine in the animal economy, or a ſyſtem of expedients in political economy, than myſelf; but in the preſent ſtate of the country ſomething of the kind may be neceſſary to prevent greater evils. It is a matter of very little comparative importance, whether we are fully ſupplied with broadcloth, linens, and muſlins, or even with tea, ſugar, and coffee; and no rational politician therefore would think of propoſing a bounty upon ſuch commodities. But it is certainly a matter of the very higheſt importance, whether we are fully ſupplied with food; and if a bounty would produce

produce ſuch a ſupply, the moſt liberal political economiſt might be juſtified in propoſing it; conſidering food as a commodity diſtinct from all others, and pre-eminently valuable.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of Bounties on the Exportation of Corn.

In diſcuſſing the policy of a bounty on the exportation of corn, it ſhould be premiſed, that the private intereſts of the farmers and proprietors ſhould never enter in the queſtion. The ſole object of our conſideration ought to be the permanent intereſt of the conſumer, in the character of which is comprehended the whole nation.

According to the general principles of political economy, it cannot be doubted, that it is for the intereſt of the civilized world that each nation ſhould purchaſe its commodities wherever they can be had the cheapeſt.

According to theſe principles, it is rather deſirable that ſome obſtacles ſhould exiſt to the exceſſive accumulation of wealth in any particular country, and that rich nations ſhould be tempted to purchaſe their corn of poorer nations, as by theſe means the wealth of the civi-

lized

lized world will not only be more rapidly increaſed, but more equably diffuſed.

It is evident, however, that local intereſts and political relations may modify the application of theſe general principles; and in a country with a territory fit for the production of corn, an independent, and at the ſame time a more equable ſupply of this neceſſary of life, may be an object of ſuch importance as to warrant a deviation from them.

It is undoubtedly true, that every thing will ultimately find its level, but this level is ſometimes effected in a very harſh manner. England may export corn a hundred years hence without the aſſiſtance of a bounty; but this is much more likely to happen from the deſtruction of her manufactures, than from the increaſe of her agriculture; and a policy which, in ſo important a point, may tend to ſoften the harſh corrections of general laws, ſeems to be juſtifiable.

The regulations reſpecting importation and exportation adopted in the corn laws that were eſtabliſhed in 1688 and 1700, ſeemed to have the effect of giving that encouragement to agriculture, which it ſo much wanted, and the

apparent reſult was gradually to produce a growth of corn in the country conſiderably above the wants of the actual population, to lower the average price of it, and give a ſteadineſs to prices that had never been experienced before.

During the ſeventeenth century, and indeed the whole period of our hiſtory previous to it, the prices of wheat were ſubject to great fluctuations, and the average price was very high. For fifty years before the year 1700, the average price of wheat per quarter was 3l. 11d. and before 1650 it was 6l. 8s. 10d.[a]. From the time of the completion of the corn laws in 1700 and 1706, the prices became extraordinarily ſteady; and the average price for forty years previous to the year 1750, ſunk ſo low as 1l. 16s. per quarter. This was the period of our greateſt exportations. In the year 1757, the laws were ſuſpended, and in the year 1773 they were totally altered. The exports of corn have ſince been regularly decreaſing, and the imports increaſing. The average price of wheat for the forty years ending in 1800, was 2l. 9s. 5d; and for the laſt five years of this

[a] Dirom's Inquiry into the Corn Laws, Appendix, No. I.

period,

period, 3l. 6s. 6d. During this laſt term, the balance of the imports of all ſorts of grain is eſtimated at 2,938,357[a], and the dreadful fluctuations of price which have occurred of late years, we are but too well acquainted with.

It is at all times dangerous to be haſty in drawing general inferences from partial experience; but, in the preſent inſtance, the period that has been conſidered is of ſo conſiderable an extent, and the changes from fluctuating and high prices to ſteady and low prices, with a return to fluctuating and high prices again, correſpond ſo accurately with the eſtabliſhment and full vigour of the corn laws, and with their ſubſequent alterations and inefficacy, that it was certainly rather a bold aſſertion in Dr. Smith to ſay, that the fall in the price of corn muſt have happened in ſpite of the bounty, and could not poſſibly have happened in conſequence of it[b]. We have a right to expect that he ſhould defend a poſition ſo contrary to all apparent experience, by the moſt powerful arguments. As in the preſent ſtate of this country, the ſubject ſeems to be of the higheſt importance, it will

[a] Anderſon's Inveſtigation of the Circumſtances which led to Scarcity, Table, p. 40.

[b] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 264.

be

be worth while to examine the validity of theſe arguments.

He obſerves, that both in years of plenty, and in years of ſcarcity, the bounty neceſſarily tends to raiſe the money price of corn ſomewhat higher than it otherwiſe would be in the home market[a].

That it does ſo in years of plenty is undoubtedly true; but that it does ſo in years of ſcarcity appears to me as undoubtedly falſe. The only argument by which Dr. Smith ſupports this latter poſition is, by ſaying that the exportation prevents the plenty of one year from relieving the ſcarcity of another. But this is certainly a very inſufficient reaſon. The ſcarce year may not immediately follow the moſt plentiful year; and it is totally contrary to the habits and practice of farmers, to ſave the ſuperfluity of ſix or ſeven years for a contingency of this kind. Great practical inconveniences generally attend the keeping of ſo large a reſerved ſtore. Difficulties often occur from a want of proper accommodations for it. It is at all times liable to damage from vermin and other cauſes. When very large, it is apt to be viewed with a jealous and grudging eye by the common people. And

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 265.

in general, the farmer may either not be able to remain ſo long without his returns; or may not be willing to employ ſo conſiderable a capital in a way in which the returns muſt neceſſarily be diſtant and precarious. On the whole, therefore, we cannot reaſonably expect that, upon this plan, the reſerved ſtore ſhould in any degree be equal to that, which in a ſcarce year would be kept at home, in a country which was in the habit of conſtant exportation to a conſiderable amount; and we know that even a very little difference in the degree of deficiency will often make a very great difference in the price.

Dr. Smith then proceeds to ſtate very juſtly, that the defenders of the corn laws do not inſiſt ſo much upon the price of corn in the actual ſtate of tillage, as upon their tendency to improve this actual ſtate, by opening a more extenſive foreign market to the corn of the farmer, and ſecuring to him a better price than he could otherwiſe expect for his commodity; which double encouragement, they imagine, muſt in a long period of years occaſion ſuch an increaſe in the production of corn, as may lower its price in the home market much more than

the bounty can raiſe it, in the ſtate of tillage then actually exiſting[a].

In anſwer to this he obſerves, that whatever extenſion of the foreign market can be occaſioned by the bounty, muſt in every particular year be altogether at the expence of the home market, as every buſhel of corn which is exported by means of the bounty, and which would not have been exported without the bounty, would have remained in the home market to increaſe the conſumption and to lower the price of that commodity.

In this obſervation he appears to me a little to miſuſe the term market. Becauſe, by ſelling a commodity below its natural price, it is poſſible to get rid of a greater quantity of it, in any particular market, than would have gone off otherwiſe, it cannot juſtly be ſaid that by this proceſs ſuch a market is proportionally extended. Though the removal of the two taxes mentioned by Dr. Smith, as paid on account of the bounty, would certainly rather increaſe the power of the lower claſſes to purchaſe; yet in each particular year the conſumption muſt be ultimately limited by the population; and the increaſe of conſumption from the removal of theſe taxes might by no means

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 265.

be ſufficient to take off the whole ſuperfluity of the farmers, without lowering the general price of corn, ſo as to deprive them of their fair recompence. If the price of Britiſh corn in the home market riſe in conſequence of the bounty, it is an unanſwerable proof, that the effectual market for Britiſh corn is extended by it; and that the diminution of demand at home, whatever it may be, is more than counterbalanced by the extenſion of the demand abroad.

There cannot be a greater diſcouragement to the production of any commodity in a large quantity, than the fear of overſtocking the market with it. Nor can there be a greater encouragement to ſuch a production, than the certainty of finding an effectual market for any quantity, however great, that can be obtained. It ſhould be obſerved further, that one of the principal objects of the bounty is to obtain a ſurplus above the home conſumption which may ſupply the deficiency of unfavourable years; but it is evident that no poſſible extenſion of the home market can attain this object.

Dr. Smith goes on to ſay, that if the two taxes paid by the people on account of the bounty, namely, the one to the government to pay this bounty, and the other paid in the advanced

vanced price of the commodity, do not, in the actual ſtate of the crop, raiſe the price of labour, and thus return upon the farmer, they muſt reduce the ability of the labouring poor to bring up their children, and by thus reſtraining the population and induſtry of the country, muſt tend to ſtunt and reſtrain the gradual extenſion of the home market, and thereby, in the long run, rather to diminiſh, than to augment, the whole market and conſumption of corn[a].

I think it has been ſhown, and indeed it will ſcarcely admit of a doubt, that the ſyſtem of exportation ariſing from the bounty has an evident tendency in years of ſcarcity to increaſe the ſupplies of corn, or to prevent their being ſo much diminiſhed as they otherwiſe would be, which comes to the ſame thing. Conſequently the labouring poor will be able to live better, and the population will be leſs checked in theſe particular years, than they would have been without the ſyſtem of exportation ariſing from the bounty. But if the effect of the bounty, in this view of the ſubject, be only to repreſs a little the population in years of plenty, while it encourages it comparatively in years of ſcarcity,

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 267.

its effect is evidently to regulate the population more equally according to that quantity of ſubſiſtence, which can permanently, and without occaſional defalcations, be ſupplied. And this effect, I have no heſitation in ſaying, is one of the greateſt advantages which can poſſibly occur to a ſociety, and contributes more to the happineſs of the labouring poor, than can eaſily be conceived by thoſe who have not deeply conſidered the ſubject. In the whole compaſs of human events, I doubt if there be a more fruitful ſource of miſery, or one more invariably productive of diſaſtrous conſequences, than a ſudden ſtart of population from two or three years of plenty, which muſt neceſſarily be repreſſed on the firſt return of ſcarcity, or even of average crops. It has been ſuggeſted, that if we were in the habit of exporting corn in conſequence of a bounty, the price would fall ſtill lower in years of extraordinary abundance, than without ſuch a bounty and ſuch exportation; becauſe the exuberance belonging to that part of the crop uſually exported would fall upon the home market. But there ſeems to be no reaſon for ſuppoſing that this would be the caſe. The quantity annually exported would by no means be fixed, but would depend upon the ſtate of

the

the crop, and the demands of the home market. One great advantage of a foreign market, both with regard to buying and ſelling, is the improbability, that years of ſcarcity, or years of abundance, ſhould in many different countries occur at the ſame time. In a year of abundance the fixed ſum of the bounty would always bear a greater proportion to the coſt of production. A greater encouragement would therefore be given to export, and a very moderate lowering of price would probably enable the farmer to diſpoſe of the whole of his exceſs in foreign markets.

The moſt plauſible argument that Dr. Smith adduces againſt the corn laws is, that as the money price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities, the advantage to the proprietor from the increaſed money price is merely apparent, and not real; ſince what he gains in his ſales, he muſt loſe in his purchaſes[a].

This poſition however, is not true, without many limitations. The money price of corn in a particular country is undoubtedly by far the moſt powerful ingredient in regulating the price of labour, and of all other commodities; but it is not enough for Dr. Smith's poſition,

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 269.

that it ſhould be the moſt powerful ingredient; it muſt be ſhown that other cauſes remaining the ſame, the price of every article will riſe and fall exactly in proportion to the price of corn, and this does not appear to be the caſe. Dr. Smith himſelf excepts all foreign commodities; but when we reflect upon the ſum of our imports, and the quantity of foreign articles uſed in our manufactures, this exception alone is of very great importance. Wool and raw hides, two moſt important materials of home growth, do not, according to Dr. Smith's own reaſonings, (Book i. c. xi. p. 363 et ſeq.) depend much upon the price of corn and the rent of land; and the price of flax is of courſe greatly influenced by the quantity we import. But woollen cloths, leather, linen, cottons, tea, ſugar, &c. which are comprehended in the above named articles, form almoſt the whole of the clothing and luxuries of the induſtrious claſſes of ſociety. Conſequently, although that part of the wages of labour which is expended in food will riſe in proportion to the price of corn, the whole of the wages will not riſe in the ſame proportion. When great improvements in manufacturing machinery have taken place in any country, that part of the price of the

the wrought commodity which pays the intereſt of the fixed capital employed in producing it, as this capital had been accumulated before the advance in the price of labour, will not riſe in conſequence of this advance, except as it requires gradual renovation. And in the caſe of great and numerous taxes on conſumption, as thoſe who live by the wages of labour muſt always receive wherewithal to pay them, at leaſt all thoſe upon neceſſaries, a riſe or fall in the price of corn, though it would increaſe or decreaſe that part of the wages of labour which reſolves itſelf into food, evidently would not increaſe or decreaſe that part which was deſtined for the payment of taxes.

It cannot then be admitted as a general poſition, that the money price of corn in any country is an accurate meaſure of the real value of ſilver in that country. But all theſe conſiderations, though of great weight to the owners of land, will not influence the growth of corn beyond the current leaſes. At the expiration of a leaſe any particular advantage which the farmer had received from a favourable proportion between the price of corn and of labour, would be taken from him, and any diſadvantage from an unfavourable proportion made up to him. The

ſole

ſole cauſe which would determine the quantity of effective capital employed in agriculture would be the extent of the effectual demand for corn, and if the bounty had really enlarged this demand, which it certainly would have done, it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe that more capital would not be employed upon the land.

When Dr. Smith ſays, that the nature of things has ſtamped upon corn a real value, which cannot be altered by merely altering the money price; and that no bounty upon exportation, no monopoly of the home market, can raiſe that value, nor the freeſt competition lower it[a], it is evident, that he changes the queſtion from the profits of the growers of corn or the proprietors of land, to the phyſical and abſolute value of corn in itſelf. I certainly do not mean to ſay, that the bounty alters the phyſical value of corn, and makes a buſhel of it ſupport a greater number of labourers for a day than it did before; but I certainly do mean to ſay, that the bounty to the Britiſh cultivator does, in the actual ſtate of things, really increaſe the demand for Britiſh corn; and thus encourages him to ſow more than he otherwiſe would do, and enables him in conſequence to employ

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 278.

more

more buſhels of corn in the maintenance of a greater number of labourers.

If Dr. Smith's theory were ſtrictly true, and the real price of corn, or its price in the ſum of all other commodities, never ſuffered any variation, it would be difficult to give a reaſon why we grow more corn now than we did 200 years ago. If no riſe in the nominal price of corn were a real riſe, or could enable the farmer to cultivate better or determine more of the national capital of the land, it would appear that agriculture was indeed in a moſt unfortunate ſituation, and that no adequate motive could exiſt to the further inveſtment of capital in this branch of induſtry. But ſurely we cannot doubt that the real price of corn varies, though it may not vary ſo much as the real price of other commodities, and that there are periods when all wrought commodities are cheaper, and periods when they are dearer, in proportion to the price of corn; and in the one caſe capital flows from manufactures to agriculture, and in the other from agriculture to manufactures. To overlook theſe periods, or conſider them of ſlight importance, is unpardonable, becauſe in every branch of trade theſe periods form the grand encouragement to an increaſe of ſupply. Undoubtedly the profits

profits of trade in any particular branch of induſtry, can never long remain higher than in others, but how are they lowered except by influx of capital occaſioned by theſe high profits? It never can be a national object permanently to increaſe the profits of any particular ſet of dealers. The national object is the increaſe of ſupply, but this object cannot be attained but by previouſly increaſing the profits of theſe dealers, and thus determining a greater quantity of capital to this particular employment. The ſhip-owners and ſailors do not make greater profits now, than they did before the navigation act; but the object of the nation was not to increaſe the profits of ſhip-owners and ſailors, but the quantity of ſhipping and ſeamen, and this could not be done but by a law, which by increaſing the demand for them, raiſed the profits of the capital before employed in this way, and determined a greater quantity to flow into the ſame channel. The object of the nation in the corn laws is not the increaſe of the profits of the farmers, or the rents of the landlords, but the determination of a greater quantity of the national capital to the land, and the conſequent increaſe of ſupply; and though in the caſe of an advance in the price of corn

from an increaſed demand, the riſe of wages, the riſe of rents, and the fall of ſilver, tend to obſcure in ſome degree our view of the ſubject; yet we cannot refuſe to acknowledge, that the real price of corn varies during periods ſufficiently long to affect the determination of capital, or we ſhall be reduced to the dilemma of owning that no motive can exiſt to the further inveſtment of capital in the production of corn.

The mode in which a bounty upon the exportation of corn operates ſeems to be this. Let us ſuppoſe that the price at which the Britiſh grower can afford to ſell his corn in average years is 55 ſhillings, and the price at which the foreign grower can ſell it, 53 ſhillings. Thus circumſtanced, it is evident that the Britiſh grower cannot export corn even in years conſiderably above an average crop. In this ſtate of things let a bounty of five ſhillings per quarter be granted on exported corn. Immediately as this bounty was eſtabliſhed the exportation would begin, and go on, till the price in the home market had riſen to the price at which Britiſh corn could be ſold abroad with the addition of the bounty. The abſtraction of a part of the home ſupply, or even the apprehenſion of it, would ſoon raiſe the price in the home

home market, and it is probable that the quantity exported before this riſe had taken place would not, at the moſt, bear ſuch a proportion to the whole quantity in the ports of Europe, as to lower the general price more than a ſhilling in the quarter. Conſequently the Britiſh grower would ſell his corn abroad for 52 ſhillings, which with the addition of the bounty would be 57 ſhillings, and what was ſold at home would bear exactly the ſame price, throwing out of our conſideration at preſent the expences of freight, &c. The Britiſh grower therefore, inſtead of 55 ſhillings at which he could afford to ſell, would get 57 ſhillings for his whole crop. Dr. Smith has ſuppoſed that a bounty of five ſhillings would raiſe the price of corn in the home market four ſhillings, but this is evidently upon the ſuppoſition that the growing price of corn was not lower abroad than at home, and in this caſe his ſuppoſition would probably be correct. In the caſe before ſuppoſed however, the extra profits of the farmer would be only two ſhillings. As far as this advance would go, it would raiſe the profits of farming, and encourage him to grow more corn. The next year therefore the ſupply would be increaſed in proportion to the number of purchaſers

chaſers of the year before, and to make this additional quantity go off the price muſt fall; and it would of courſe fall both in the foreign and the home market, as while any exportation continues, the price in the home market will be regulated by the price in foreign markets with the addition of the bounty. This fall may be inconſiderable, but ſtill the effect will be in this direction, and after the firſt year, the price of corn will for ſome time continue to fall towards its former level. In the mean time however, the cheapneſs of corn abroad might gradually tend to increaſe the number of purchaſers, and extend the effectual demand for corn, not only at the late reduced prices, but at the original or even higher prices. But every extenſion of this kind would tend to raiſe the price of corn abroad to a nearer level with the growing price at home, and conſequently would give the Britiſh farmer a greater advantage from the bounty. If the demand abroad extended only in proportion to the cheapneſs, the effect would be, that part of the agriculture of foreign countries would be checked to make room for the increaſed agriculture of Britain, and ſome of the foreign growers, who traded upon the ſmalleſt profits would be juſtled out of the markets.

At

At what time the advanced price at home would begin to affect the price of labour and of all other commodities, it would be very difficult to ſay; but it is probable that the interval might be conſiderable, becauſe the firſt and greateſt riſe, upon the ſuppoſition that has been made, would not be above threepence in the buſhel, and this advance would for ſome time diminiſh every year. But after the full effect from this advance, whatever it might be, had taken place, the influence of the bounty would by no means be loſt. For ſome years it would give the Britiſh grower an abſolute advantage over the foreign grower. This advantage would of courſe gradually diminiſh, becauſe it is the nature of all effectual demand to be ultimately ſupplied, and to oblige the producers to ſell at the loweſt price that they can afford. But after having experienced a period of very decided encouragement, the Britiſh grower will find himſelf at laſt on a level with the foreign grower, which he was not before the bounty, and in the habit of ſupplying a larger market than his own upon equal terms with his competitors. And after this, if the foreign and Britiſh markets continued to extend themſelves equally, the Britiſh grower would continue to

proportion

proportion his ſupplies to both, becauſe unleſs a particular increaſe of demand were to take place at home, he could never withdraw his foreign ſupply without lowering the price of his whole crop; and the nation would thus be in poſſeſſion of a conſtant ſtore for years of ſcarcity.

To the preſent ſtate of things, indeed, the ſuppoſition here made will not apply. In average years we do not grow enough for our own conſumption. Our firſt object muſt therefore be to ſupply our own wants before we aim at obtaining an exceſs, and the reſtrictive laws on importation are ſtrongly calculated to produce this effect. It is difficult to conceive a more decided encouragement to the inveſtment of capital in agriculture, than the certainty, that for many years to come, the price will never fall ſo low as the growing price. If ſuch a certainty has no tendency to give encouragement to Britiſh agriculture, on account of the advance it may occaſion in the price of labour, it may ſafely be pronounced, that no poſſible increaſe of wealth and population can ever encourage the production of corn[a]. In a nation which

[a] If the operation of the corn laws, as they were eſtabliſhed

which never imported corn except in a ſcarcity, commerce could never get the ſtart of agriculture; and reſtrictive laws on importation, as far as they go, tend to give a relative diſcouragement to manufactures, and a relative encouragement agriculture. If without diminiſhing manufactures, they were merely to determine a greater part of the future annual accumulation to fall on the land, the effect would undoubtedly be in the higheſt degree deſireable; but even allowing that the preſent very rapid march of wealth in general were to ſuffer a ſlight relaxation in its progreſs, if there be any foundation whatever for the alarms that have of late been expreſſed reſpecting the advantageous employment of ſo rapidly increaſing a capital, we might ſurely be willing to ſacrifice a ſmall portion of preſent

in 1700, had continued uninterrupted, I cannot bring myſelf to believe, that we ſhould be now in the habit of importing ſo much corn as we do at preſent. Putting the bounty on exportation out of the queſtion, the reſtrictive laws on importation alone would have made it impoſſible. The demand for Britiſh corn would, for the laſt 30 years, have been both greater and more uniform than it has been; and it is contrary to every principle of ſupply and demand to ſuppoſe, that this would not have occaſioned a greater growth. Dr. Smith's argument clearly proves too much, which is as bad as proving too little.

riches,

riches, in order to attain a greater degree of ſecurity, independence, and permanent proſperity.

Having conſidered the effect of the bounty on the farmer, it remains to conſider its effect on the conſumer. It muſt be allowed, that all the direct effects of the bounty are to raiſe, and not to lower the price of corn to the conſumer; but its indirect effects are both to lower the average price, and to prevent the variations above and below that price. If we take any period of ſome length prior to the eſtabliſhment of the bounty, we ſhall find that the average price of corn is moſt powerfully affected by years of ſcarcity. From 1637 to 1700, both incluſive, the average price of corn, according to Dr. Smith, was 2l. 11s. $0\frac{1}{3}$; yet in 1688 the growing price, according to an eſtimate of Gregory King, which Dr. Smith ſuppoſes to be correct, was only 1l. 8s. It appears therefore, that during this period it was the monopoly price from deficiency of ſupply, rather than the growing price which influenced the general average. But this high average price would not proportionally encourage the cultivation of corn. Though the farmer might feel very ſanguine during one or two years of high price, and project many improve-

ments, yet the glut in the market which would follow, would depreſs him in the ſame degree, and deſtroy all his projects. Sometimes, indeed, a year of high price really tends to impoveriſh the land, and prepare the way for future ſcarcity. The period is too ſhort to determine more capital to the land, and a temporary plenty is often reſtored by ſowing ground that is not ready for it, and thus injuring the permanent intereſts of agriculture. It may eaſily happen therefore that a very fluctuating price, although the general average be high, will not tend to encourage the determination of capital to the land in the ſame degree as a ſteadier price with a lower general average, provided that this average is above the growing price. And if the bounty has any tendency to encourage a greater ſupply, and to cauſe the general average to be more affected by the growing price than the price of ſcarcity, it may produce a benefit of very high magnitude to the conſumer, while at the ſame time it furniſhes a better encouragement to the farmer, two objects which have been conſidered as incompatible, though not with ſufficient reaſon. For let us ſuppoſe that the growing price in this country is 55 ſhillings per quarter, and that for three years out of the laſt ten, the price from

ſcarcity

ſcarcity had been five guineas, for four years 55 ſhillings, and for the remaining three years 52 ſhillings. In this caſe the average of the ten years will be a little above 31. 9s. This is a moſt encouraging price, but the three years which were below the growing price would deſtroy, in a great meaſure, its effect, and it cannot be doubted that agriculture would have received a much more beneficial impulſe, if the price had continued ſteadily at 3 guineas during the whole time. With regard to the conſumer, the advantage of the latter average need not be inſiſted on.

When Dr. Smith aſſerted that a fall in the price of corn could not poſſibly happen in conſequence of a bounty, he overlooked a diſtinction which it is neceſſary to make in this caſe between the growing price of corn in years of common plenty, and the average price of a period including years of ſcarcity, which are in fact two very different things. Suppoſing the wages of labour to be regulated more frequently by the former than the latter price, which perhaps is the caſe, it will readily be allowed that the bounty could not lower the growing price, though it might very eaſily lower the average price of a long period, and I have no doubt

whatever had this effect in a conſiderable degree during the firſt half of the laſt century.

The operation of the bounty on the value of ſilver is, in the ſame manner, in its direct effects to depreciate it, but its indirect effects may perhaps tend more powerfully to prevent it from falling. In the progreſs of wealth, when commerce outſtrips agriculture, there is a conſtant tendency to a depreciation of ſilver, and a tendency to an oppoſite effect, when the balance leans to the ſide of agriculture. During the firſt half of the laſt century agriculture ſeemed to flouriſh more than commerce, and ſilver, according to Dr. Smith, ſeemed to riſe in value in moſt of the countries in Europe. During the latter half of the century commerce ſeemed to have got the ſtart of agriculture, and the effect not being counteracted by a deficiency of circulating medium, ſilver has been very generally depreciated. As far as this depreciation is common to the commercial world, it is comparatively[a] of little importance; but undoubtedly

[a] Even the depreciation which is common to the commercial world produces much evil to individuals who have fixed incomes, and one important national evil, that of indiſpoſing landlords to let long leaſes of farms. With regard to leaſes, the operation of the bounty would certainly be favourable.

It

undoubtedly thoſe nations will feel it moſt, where this cauſe has prevailed in the greateſt degree, and where the nominal price of labour has riſen the higheſt, and has been moſt affected by the competition of commercial wealth, operating on a comparative deficiency of corn. It will certainly be allowed that thoſe landed nations which ſupply the ports of Europe with corn, will be the leaſt liable to this diſadvantage, and even thoſe ſmall ſtates whoſe wants are known will probably ſuffer leſs than thoſe whoſe wants, at the ſame time that they are quite uncertain, may be very conſiderable. That England is in the latter ſituation, and that the rapid progreſs of commercial wealth, combined with years of ſcarcity, has raiſed the nominal price of wages

It has appeared, that after the advance occaſioned on its firſt eſtabliſhment, the price of corn would for many years tend to fall towards its former level, and if no other cauſes intervened a very conſiderable time might elapſe before it had regained the height from which it began to ſink. Conſequently after the firſt depreciation, future depreciation would be checked, and of courſe long leaſes more encouraged. The abſolute depreciation occaſioned by the eſtabliſhment of the bounty, would be perfectly inconſiderable, compared with the other cauſes of depreciation, which are conſtantly operating in this country. Independently of the funding ſyſtem, the extended uſe of paper, the influx of commercial wealth, and the comparative deficiency of corn, every tax on the neceſſaries of life tends to lower the value of ſilver.

more than in any other country of Europe, will not be denied; and the natural conſequence is, that ſilver is more depreciated here than in the reſt of Europe.

If the bounty has any effect in weakening this cauſe of depreciation, by preventing the average price of corn from being ſo much affected by the price of ſcarcity, the ultimate advantage which its indirect operation occaſions, with regard to the value of ſilver, may more than counterbalance the preſent diſadvantage of its direct operation.

On the whole therefore it appears, that the corn laws by opening a larger, but more particularly, by opening a ſteadier demand for Britiſh corn, muſt give a decided encouragement to Britiſh agriculture[a].

This,

[a] On account of the tendency of population to increaſe in proportion to the means of ſubſiſtence, it has been ſuppoſed by ſome, that there would always be a ſufficient demand at home for any quantity of corn which could be grown. But this is an error. It is undoubtedly true, that if the farmers could gradually increaſe their growth of corn to any extent, and could ſell it *ſufficiently cheap*, that a population would ariſe at home to demand the whole of it. But in this caſe, the great increaſe of demand ariſes ſolely from the cheapneſs, and muſt therefore be totally of a different nature from ſuch a demand

This, it will be allowed, is an advantage of conſiderable magnitude; but this advantage cannot be attained without the attendant evil of eſtabliſhing a fixed difference between the price of corn in Britain and in the ports of Europe, and as far as the nominal price of corn regulates the price of all other commodities, a proportional difference in the value of ſilver. With regard to the *permanent* intereſts of commerce there is great reaſon to believe, that this diſadvantage would be more than counterbalanced by the tendency of a fuller and ſteadier ſupply of corn to prevent the future depreciation of ſilver in this country, but ſtill it is a preſent evil; and the good and evil of the ſyſtem muſt be compared with the good and evil of a perfect freedom in the commerce of grain, the name of which is undoubtedly moſt faſcinating. The advantages of an unlimited freedom of importation and exportation are obvious. The ſpe-

demand as, in the actual circumſtances of the country, would encourage an increaſed ſupply. If the makers of ſuperfine broad cloths would ſell their commodity for a ſhilling a yard inſtead of a guinea, it cannot be doubted that the demand would increaſe more than ten fold; but the certainty of ſuch an increaſe of demand, in ſuch a caſe, would have no tendency whatever, in the actual circumſtances of any known country, to encourage the manufacture of broad cloths.

cific

cific evil to be apprehended from it in a rich and commercial country is, that the rents of land and the wages of labour would not fall in proportion to the fall in the price of corn. If land yielded no other produce than corn, the proprietors would be abſolutely obliged to lower their rents exactly in proportion to the diminiſhed demand and diminiſhed price, becauſe, univerſally, it is price that determines rent, not rent that determines price; but in a country where the demands for the products of paſture are very great, and daily increaſing, the rents of land would not be entirely determined by the price of corn; and though they would fall with a fall in the price of corn, they would not fall in proportion. In the ſame manner, the wages of labour being influenced not only by the price of corn, but by the competition of commercial wealth, and the other cauſes before enumerated, though they would probably fall with a fall in the price of corn would not fall in proportion. During the firſt half of the laſt century the average price of corn fell conſiderably, but owing to the demand for labour ariſing from an increaſing commerce, the price of labour did not fall with it. High rents and high wages occaſioned by an increaſed demand and an increaſed price of corn, cannot poſſibly

poſſibly ſtop cultivation, for the obvious reaſon, that the power of paying the advance is given previous to the advance taking place; but high rents and high wages ſupported by other cauſes than the price of corn tend moſt powerfully to ſtop it. Under theſe circumſtances land on which little labour has been beſtowed, will generally yield a higher rent than that on which much has been beſtowed, and the bringing of freſh land under cultivation is moſt powerfully checked. A rich and commercial nation is thus by the natural courſe of things led more to paſture than tillage, and is tempted to become daily more dependent upon others for its ſupplies of corn. If all the nations of Europe could be conſidered as one great country, and if any one ſtate could be as ſecure of its ſupplies from others, as the paſture diſtricts of a particular ſtate are from the corn diſtricts in their neighbourhood, there would be no harm in this dependence, and no perſon would think of propoſing corn laws. But can we ſafely conſider Europe in this light? The fortunate ſituation of this country, and the excellence of its laws and government exempt it, above any other nation from foreign invaſion and domeſtic tumult, and it is a pardonable

donable love of one's country, which under ſuch circumſtances produces an unwillingneſs to expoſe it, in ſo important a point as the ſupply of its principal food, to ſhare in the changes and chances which may happen to the continent. How would the miſeries of France have been aggravated during the revolution if ſhe had been dependent on foreign countries for the ſupport of two or three millions of her people.

That we can readily turn ourſelves from an importing to an exporting nation, in the article of corn, I would by no means pretend to ſay; but both theory, and the experience of the firſt half of the laſt century, warrant us in concluding it practicable; and we cannot but allow that it is worth the experiment, as the permanence of our national proſperity may depend upon it[a]. If we proceed in our preſent courſe, let us but for a moment reflect on the probable conſequences. We can hardly doubt that in the courſe of ſome years, we ſhall draw

[a] Since this was firſt written, a new ſyſtem of corn laws has been eſtabliſhed by the legiſlature, but it is not ſo powerful in its operation as that of 1688 and 1700. The new laws tend ſtrongly to encourage the growth of an independent ſupply of corn, but not ſo ſtrongly the production of an exceſs. An independent ſupply however is certainly the firſt and moſt important object.

from

from America, and the nations bordering on the Baltic, as much as two millions of quarters of wheat, beſides other corn, the ſupport of above two millions of people. If under theſe circumſtances, any commercial diſcuſſion, or other diſpute, were to ariſe with theſe nations, with what a weight of power they would negotiate! Not the whole Britiſh navy could offer a more convincing argument than the ſimple threat of ſhutting all their ports. I am not unaware, that in general, we may ſecurely depend upon people's not acting directly contrary to their intereſt. But this conſideration, all powerful as it is, will ſometimes yield voluntarily to national indignation, and is ſometimes forced to yield to the reſentment of a ſovereign. It is of ſufficient weight in practice when applied to manufactures; becauſe a delay in their ſale is not of ſuch immediate conſequence, and from their ſmaller bulk they are eaſily ſmuggled. But in the caſe of corn, a delay of three or four months may produce the moſt complicated miſery; and from the great bulk of corn, it will generally be in the power of a ſovereign to execute almoſt completely his reſentful purpoſe. Small commercial ſtates which depend nearly for the whole of their ſupplies on foreign powers, will

always have many friends. They are not of ſufficient conſequence to excite any general indignation againſt them, and if they cannot be ſupplied from one quarter, they will from another. But this is by no means the caſe with ſuch a country as Great Britain, whoſe commercial ambition is peculiarly calculated to excite a general jealouſy, and in fact has excited it to a very great degree. If our commerce continue increaſing for a few years, and our commercial population with it, we ſhall be laid ſo bare to the ſhafts of fortune, that nothing but a miracle can ſave us from being ſtruck. The periodical return of ſuch ſeaſons of dearth, as thoſe which we have of late experienced, I conſider as abſolutely certain, upon our preſent importing ſyſtem: but excluding from the queſtion at preſent, the dreadful diſtreſs that they occaſion which however no man of humanity can long baniſh from his mind, I would aſk, is it politic, merely with a view to our national greatneſs, to render ourſelves thus dependent upon others for our ſupport, and put it in the power of a combination againſt us, to diminiſh our population two millions?

To reſtore our independence, and build our national greatneſs and commercial proſperity on the

the ſure foundation of agriculture, it is evidently not ſufficient, to propoſe premiums for tillage, to cultivate this or that waſte, or even to paſs a general incloſure bill, though theſe are all excellent as far as they go. If the increaſe of the commercial population keep pace with theſe efforts, we ſhall only be where we were before, with regard to the neceſſity of importation. The object required is to alter the relative proportion between the commercial and the agricultural population of the country, which can only be done by ſome ſyſtem which will determine a greater proportion of the national capital to the land. I ſee no other way at preſent of effecting this object, but by corn laws adapted to the peculiar circumſtances of the country and the ſtate of foreign markets. All ſyſtems of peculiar reſtraints and encouragements are undoubtedly diſagreeable, and the neceſſity of reſorting to them may juſtly be lamented. But the objection which Dr. Smith brings againſt bounties in general, that of forcing ſome part of the induſtry of the country into a channel leſs advantageous than that in which it would run of its own accord*, does not apply in the preſent inſtance, on account of the pre-eminent qualities of the products of agri-

* Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 278.

culture,

culture, and the dreadful conſequences that attend the ſlighteſt failure of them. The nature of things has indeed ſtamped upon corn a peculiar value[a]; and this remark, made by Dr. Smith for another purpoſe, may fairly be applied to juſtify the exception of this commodity from the objections againſt bounties in general. If throughout the commercial world every kind of trade were perfectly free, one ſhould undoubtedly feel the greateſt reluctance in propoſing any interruption to ſuch a ſyſtem of general liberty; and indeed, under ſuch circumſtances, agriculture would not need peculiar encouragements. But under the preſent univerſal prevalence of the commercial ſyſtem, with all its different expedients of encouragement and reſtraint, it is folly to except from our attention the great manufacture of corn which ſupports all the reſt. The high duties paid on the importation of foreign manufactures are ſo direct an encouragement to the manufacturing part of the ſociety, that nothing but ſome encouragement of the ſame kind can place the manufacturers and cultivators of this country on a fair footing. Any ſyſtem of encouragement therefore, which might be found neceſſary for the commerce of grain, would

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. b. iv. c. v. p. 278.

evidently

evidently be owing to the prior encouragements which had been given to manufactures. If all be free, I have nothing to ſay; but if we protect and encourage, it ſeems to be folly not to encourage that production, which of all others is the moſt important and valuable[a].

Let

[a] Though I have dwelt much on the importance of raiſing a quantity of corn in the country beyond the demands of the home conſumption, yet I do not mean to recommend that general ſyſtem of ploughing, which takes place in moſt parts of France, and defeats its own purpoſe. A large ſtock of cattle is not only neceſſary as a very valuable part of the food of the country, and as contributing very greatly to the comforts of a conſiderable portion of its population; but it is alſo neceſſary in the production of corn itſelf. A large ſurplus produce, in proportion to the number of perſons employed, can never be obtained without a great ſtock of cattle. At the ſame time it does not follow, that we ſhould throw all the land that is fit for it into paſture. It is an obſervation of Mr. Young, and I ſhould think a juſt one, that the firſt and moſt obvious improvement in agriculture is to make the fallows of a country ſupport the additional cattle and ſheep wanted in it. (Travels in France, vol. i. p. 361.) I am by no means ſanguine however, as to the practicability of converting England again into an exporting country, while the demands for the products of paſture are daily increaſing, from the increaſing riches of the commercial part of the nation. But ſhould this be really conſidered as impracticable, it ſeems to point out to us one of the great cauſes of the decay of nations. We have always heard that ſtates and empires have

Let it not however be imagined, that the moſt enlightened ſyſtem of agriculture, though it

their periods of declenſion; and we learn from hiſtory that the different nations of the earth have flouriſhed in a kind of ſucceſſion, and that poor countries have been continually riſing on the ruins of their richer neighbours. Upon the commercial ſyſtem, this kind of ſucceſſion ſeems to be in the natural and neceſſary courſe of things, independently of the effects of war. If from the increaſing riches of the commercial part of any nation, and the conſequently increaſing demands for the products of paſture, more land were daily laid down to graſs, and more corn imported from other countries, the unavoidable conſequence ſeems to be, that the increaſing proſperity of theſe countries, which their exportations of corn would contribute to accelerate, muſt ultimately diminiſh the population and power of the countries which had foſtered them. The ancients always attributed this natural weakneſs and old age of ſtates to luxury. But the moderns who have generally conſidered luxury as a principal encouragement to commerce and manufactures, and conſequently a powerful inſtrument of proſperity, have, with great appearance of reaſon, been unwilling to conſider it as a cauſe of decline. But allowing, with the moderns, all the advantages of luxury, and when it falls ſhort of actual vice, they are certainly great; there ſeems to be a point beyond which it muſt neceſſarily become prejudicial to a ſtate, and bring with it the ſeeds of weakneſs and decay. This point is, when it is puſhed ſo far as to trench on the funds neceſſary for its ſupport, and to become an impediment inſtead of an encouragement to agriculture.

I ſhould

it will undoubtedly be able to produce food beyond the demands of the actual population, can ever

I ſhould be much miſunderſtood, if, from any thing that I have ſaid in the four laſt chapters, I ſhould be conſidered as not ſufficiently aware of the advantages derived from commerce and manufactures. I look upon them as the moſt diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of civilization, the moſt obvious and ſtriking marks of the improvement of ſociety, and calculated to enlarge our enjoyments, and add to the ſum of human happineſs. No great ſurplus produce of agriculture could exiſt without them, and if it did exiſt, it would be comparatively of very little value. But ſtill they are rather the ornaments and embelliſhments of the political ſtructure than its foundations. While theſe foundations are perfectly ſecure, we cannot be too ſolicitous to make all the apartments convenient and elegant; but if there be the ſlighteſt reaſon to fear that the foundations themſelves may give way, it ſeems to be folly to continue directing our principal attention to the leſs eſſential parts. There has never yet been an inſtance in hiſtory, of a large nation continuing with undiminiſhed vigour, to ſupport four or five millions of its people on imported corn; nor do I believe that there ever will be ſuch an inſtance in future. England is, undoubtedly, from her inſular ſituation, and commanding navy, the moſt likely to form an exception to this rule; but in ſpite even of the peculiar advantages of England, it appears to me clear that if ſhe continue yearly to increaſe her importations of corn, ſhe cannot ultimately eſcape that decline which ſeems to be the natural and neceſſary conſequence of exceſſive commercial wealth. I am not now ſpeaking of

ever be made to keep pace with an unchecked population. The errors that have ariſen from the conſtant appearance of a full ſupply, pro-

the next twenty or thirty years, but of the next two or three hundred. And though we are little in the habit of looking ſo far forwards, yet it may be queſtioned, whether we are not bound in duty to make ſome exertions to avoid a ſyſtem which muſt neceſſarily terminate in the weakneſs and decline of our poſterity. But whether we make any practical application of ſuch a diſcuſſion or not, it is curious to contemplate the cauſes of thoſe reverſes in the fates of empires, which ſo frequently changed the face of the world in paſt times, and may be expected to produce ſimilar, though perhaps not ſuch violent changes in future. War was undoubtedly in ancient times, the principal cauſe of theſe changes; but it frequently only finiſhed a work which exceſs of luxury and the neglect of agriculture had begun. Foreign invaſions, or internal convulſions, produce but a temporary and comparatively ſlight effect on ſuch countries as Lombardy, Tuſcany, and Flanders, but are fatal to ſuch ſtates as Holland and Hamburgh; and though the commerce and manufactures of England will probably always be ſupported in a great degree by her agriculture, yet that part which is not ſo ſupported will ſtill remain ſubject to the reverſes of dependent ſtates.

We ſhould recollect, that it is only within the laſt twenty or thirty years that we have become an importing nation. In ſo ſhort a period, it could hardly be expected that the evils of the ſyſtem ſhould be perceptible. We have however already felt ſome of its inconveniences; and if we perſevere in it, its evil conſequences may by no means be a matter of remote ſpeculation.

duced

duced by the agricultural ſyſtem, and the ſource of ſome other prejudices on the ſubject of population, will be noticed in the following chapter.

CHAP. XI.

On the prevailing Errors reſpecting Population and Plenty.

It has been obſerved, that many countries at the period of their greateſt degree of populouſneſs have lived in the greateſt plenty, and have been able to export corn; but at other periods, when their population was very low, have lived in continual poverty and want, and have been obliged to import corn. Egypt, Paleſtine, Rome, Sicily, and Spain, are cited as particular exemplifications of this fact; and it has been inferred, that an increaſe of population in any ſtate, not cultivated to the utmoſt, will tend rather to augment than diminiſh the relative plenty of the whole ſociety; and that, as Lord Kaimes obſerves, a country cannot eaſily become too populous for agriculture; becauſe agriculture has the ſignal property of producing food in proportion to the number of conſumers[a].

The general facts from which theſe inferen-

[a] Sketches of the Hiſtory of Man, b. i. ſketch i. p. 106, 107. 8vo. 1788.

ces

ces are drawn, there is no reaſon to doubt; but the inferences by no means follow from the premiſes. It is the nature of agriculture, particularly when well conducted, to produce ſupport for a conſiderable number above that which it employs; and conſequently if theſe members of the ſociety, or as Sir James Steuart calls them, the free hands, do not increaſe, ſo as to reach the limit of the number which can be ſupported by the ſurplus produce, the whole population of the country may continue for ages increaſing with the improving ſtate of agriculture, and yet always be able to export corn. But this increaſe after a certain period, will be very different from the natural and unreſtricted increaſe of population; it will merely follow the ſlow augmentation of produce from the gradual improvement of agriculture, and population will ſtill be checked by the difficulty of procuring ſubſiſtence. It is very juſtly obſerved by Sir James Steuart, that the population of England in the middle of the laſt century when the exports of corn were conſiderable, was ſtill checked for want of food[a]. The preciſe meaſure of the population in a country thus circumſtanced, will not indeed be the quantity of food, becauſe

[a] Polit. Econ. vol. i. b. i. c. xv. p. 100.

part of it is exported, but the quantity of employment. The ſtate of this employment however will neceſſarily regulate the wages of labour, on which depends the power of the lower claſſes of people to procure food; and according as the employment of the country is increaſing, whether ſlowly or rapidly, theſe wages will be ſuch, as either to check or to encourage early marriages, ſuch, as to enable a labourer to ſupport only two or three, or as many as five or ſix children.

The quantity of employment in any country will not of courſe vary from year to year, in the ſame manner as the quantity of produce muſt neceſſarily do, from the variation of the ſeaſons; and conſequently the check from want of employment will be much more ſteady in its operation, and be much more favourable to the lower claſſes of people, than the check from the immediate want of food. The firſt will be the preventive check; the ſecond the poſitive check. When the demand for labour is either ſtationary, or increaſing very ſlowly, people not ſeeing any employment open by which they can ſupport a family, or the wages of common labour being inadequate to this purpoſe, will of courſe be deterred from marrying. But if a demand

demand for labour continue increaſing with ſome rapidity, although the ſupply of food be uncertain, on account of variable ſeaſons, and a dependence on other countries, the population will evidently go on, till it is poſitively checked by famine, or the diſeaſes ariſing from ſevere want.

Scarcity and extreme poverty therefore may or may not accompany an increaſing population, according to circumſtances; but they muſt neceſſarily accompany a permanently declining population; becauſe there never has been, nor probably ever will be, any other cauſe than want of food, which makes the population of a country permanently decline. In the numerous inſtances of depopulation which occur in hiſtory, the cauſes of it may always be traced to the want of induſtry, or the ill direction of that induſtry, ariſing from violence, bad government, ignorance, &c. which firſt occaſions a want of food, and of courſe depopulation follows. When Rome adopted the cuſtom of importing all her corn, and laying all Italy into paſture, ſhe ſoon declined in population. The cauſes of the depopulation of Egypt and Turkey have already been alluded to; and in the caſe of Spain, it was certainly not the numerical loſs of people occaſioned

ſioned by the expulſion of the Moors; but the induſtry and capital thus expelled, which permanently injured her population. When a country has been depopulated by violent cauſes, if a bad government, with its uſual concomitant inſecurity of property enſue, which has generally been the caſe in all thoſe countries which are now leſs peopled than formerly, neither the ſood nor the population can recover themſelves, and the inhabitants will probably live in ſevere want. But when an accidental depopulation takes place, in a country which was before populous and induſtrious, and in the habit of exporting corn, if the remaining inhabitants be left at liberty to exert, and do exert, their induſtry in the ſame direction as before, it is a ſtrange idea to entertain that they would then be unable to ſupply themſelves with corn in the ſame plenty; particularly as the diminiſhed numbers would of courſe cultivate principally the more fertile parts of their territory, and not be obliged as in their more populous ſtate, to apply to ungrateful ſoils. Countries in this ſituation would evidently have the ſame chance of recovering their former number, as they had originally of reaching this number; and indeed if abſolute

populouſneſs

populouſneſs were neceſſary to relative plenty, as ſome agriculturiſts have ſuppoſed[a], it would be impoſſible for new colonies to increaſe with the ſame rapidity as old ſtates.

The

[a] Among others, I allude more particularly to Mr. Anderſon, who, in a *Calm Inveſtigation of the Circumſtances which have led to the preſent Scarcity of Grain in Britain*, (publiſhed in 1801) has laboured with extraordinary earneſtneſs, and I believe with the beſt intentions poſſible, to impreſs this curious truth on the minds of his countrymen. The particular poſition which he attempts to prove is, *that an increaſe of population in any ſtate whoſe fields have not been made to attain their higheſt poſſible degree of productiveneſs, (a thing that probably has never yet been ſeen on this globe) will neceſſarily have its means of ſubſiſtence rather augmented than diminiſhed, by that augmentation of its population*; *and the reverſe*. The propoſition is, to be ſure, expreſſed rather obſcurely; but from the context, his meaning evidently is, that every increaſe of population tends to increaſe relative plenty, and vice verſâ. He concludes his proofs by obſerving, that if the facts which he has thus brought forward and connected do not ſerve to remove the fears of thoſe who doubt the poſſibility of this country producing abundance to ſuſtain its increaſing population, were it to augment in a ratio greatly more progreſſive than it has yet done, he ſhould doubt whether they could be convinced of it, were one even to riſe from the dead to tell them ſo. Mr. A. is perhaps juſtified in this doubt, from the known incredulity of the age, which might cauſe people to remain unconvinced in both caſes. I agree with Mr. A. however, entirely, reſpecting the importance of directing a greater part of

The prejudices on the ſubject of population bear a very ſtriking reſemblance to the old prejudices about ſpecie, and we know how ſlowly and with what difficulty theſe laſt have yielded to juſter conceptions. Politicians obſerving, that ſtates which were powerful and proſperous were almoſt invariably populous, have miſtaken an effect for a cauſe, and concluded that their population was the cauſe of their proſperity, inſtead of their proſperity being the cauſe of their population; as the old political economiſts concluded, that the abundance of ſpecie was the cauſe of national wealth, inſtead of the effect of it. The annual produce of the land and labour, in both theſe inſtances, became in conſequence a ſecondary conſideration, and its increaſe, it was conceived, would naturally follow the increaſe of ſpecie in the one caſe, or of population in the other. The folly of endeavouring by forcible means to increaſe the quantity of ſpecie in any country, and the abſolute impoſſibility of accu-

of the national induſtry to agriculture; but from the circumſtance of its being poſſible for a country, with a certain direction of its induſtry, always to export corn, although it may be very populous, he has been led into the ſtrange error of ſuppoſing, that an agricultural country could ſupport an unchecked population.

mulating

mulating it beyond a certain level by any human laws that can be deviſed, are now fully eſtabliſhed, and have been completely exemplified in the inſtances of Spain and Portugal; but the illuſion ſtill remains reſpecting population; and under this impreſſion, almoſt every political treatiſe has abounded in propoſals to encourage population, with little or no comparative reference to the means of its ſupport. Yet ſurely the folly of endeavouring to increaſe the quantity of ſpecie in any country without an increaſe of the commodities which it is to circulate, is not greater, than that of endeavouring to increaſe the number of people without an increaſe of the food which is to maintain them; and it will be found, that the level above which no human laws can raiſe the population of a country, is a limit more fixed and impaſſable than the limit to the accumulation of ſpecie. However improbable in fact, it is poſſible to conceive, that means might be invented of retaining a quantity of ſpecie in a ſtate, greatly beyond what was demanded by the produce of its land and labour; but when by great encouragements, population has been raiſed to ſuch a height, that this produce is meted out to each individual in the ſmalleſt portions that can ſupport life, no

ſtretch

ſtretch of ingenuity can even conceive the poſſibility of going further.

It has appeared, I think, clearly, in the review of different ſocieties given in the former part of this work, that thoſe countries the inhabitants of which were ſunk in the moſt barbarous ignorance, or oppreſſed by the moſt cruel tyranny, however low they might be in actual population, were very populous in proportion to their means of ſubſiſtence; and upon the ſlighteſt failure of the ſeaſons generally ſuffered the ſeverities of want. Ignorance and deſpotiſm ſeem to have no tendency to deſtroy the paſſion which prompts to increaſe; but they effectually deſtroy the checks to it from reaſon and foreſight. The improvident barbarian who thinks only of his preſent wants, or the miſerable peaſant, who, from his political ſituation, feels little ſecurity of reaping what he has ſown, will ſeldom be deterred from gratifying his paſſions by the proſpect of inconveniences which cannot be expected to preſs on him under three or four years. But though this want of foreſight which is foſtered by ignorance and deſpotiſm tend thus rather to encourage the procreation of children, it is abſolutely fatal to the induſtry which is to ſupport them. Induſtry cannot

cannot exiſt without foreſight and ſecurity. The indolence of the ſavage is well known; and the poor Egyptian or Abyſſinian farmer without capital, who rents land which is let out yearly to the higheſt bidder, and who is conſtantly ſubject to the demands of his tyrannical maſters, to the caſual plunder of an enemy, and, not unfrequently, to the violation of his miſerable contract, can have no heart to be induſtrious, and if he had, could not exerciſe that induſtry with ſucceſs. Even poverty itſelf, which appears to be the great ſpur to induſtry, when it has once paſſed certain limits, almoſt ceaſes to operate. The indigence which is hopeleſs, deſtroys all vigorous exertion, and confines the efforts to what is ſufficient for bare exiſtence. It is the hope of bettering our condition, and the fear of want, rather than want itſelf, that is the beſt ſtimulus to induſtry; and its moſt conſtant and beſt directed efforts will almoſt invariably be found among a claſs of people above the claſs of the wretchedly poor.

The effect of ignorance and oppreſſion will therefore always be to deſtroy the ſprings of induſtry, and conſequently to diminiſh the annual produce of the land and labour in any country; and this diminution will inevitably be followed

by a decreaſe of the population, in ſpite of the birth of any number of children whatever, annually. The deſire of immediate gratification, and the removal of the reſtraints to it from prudence, may perhaps, in ſuch countries, prompt univerſally to early marriages; but when theſe habits have once reduced the people to the loweſt poſſible ſtate of poverty, they can evidently have no further effect upon the population. Their only effect muſt be on the degree of mortality; and there is no doubt, that if we could obtain accurate bills of mortality in thoſe ſouthern countries, where very few women remain unmarried, and all marry young, the proportion of the annual deaths would be 1 in 17, 18, or 20, inſtead of 1 in 34, 36, or 40, as in European ſtates, where the preventive check operates.

That an increaſe of population, when it follows in its natural order, is both a great poſitive good in itſelf, and abſolutely neceſſary to a further increaſe in the annual produce of the land and labour of any country, I ſhould be the laſt to deny. The only queſtion is, what is the natural order of its progreſs? In this point, Sir James Steuart who has in general explained this ſubject ſo well, appears to me to have fallen into

into an error. He determines that multiplication is the efficient cauſe of agriculture, and not agriculture of multiplication[a]. But though it may be allowed, that the increaſe of people beyond what could eaſily ſubſiſt on the natural fruits of the earth, firſt prompted man to till the ground; and that the view of maintaining a family, or of obtaining ſome valuable conſideration in exchange for the products of agriculture, ſtill operates as the principal ſtimulus to cultivation; yet it is clear, that theſe products, in their actual ſtate, muſt be beyond the loweſt wants of the exiſting population, before any permanent increaſe can poſſibly be ſupported. We know that a multiplication of births has in numberleſs inſtances taken place, which has produced no effect upon agriculture, and has merely been followed by an increaſe of diſeaſes; but perhaps there is no inſtance where a permanent increaſe of agriculture, has not effected a permanent increaſe of population, ſomewhere or other. Conſequently, agriculture may with more propriety be termed the efficient cauſe of population, than population of agriculture[b], though they certainly

[a] Polit. Econ. vol. i. b. i. c. xviii. p. 114.

[b] Sir James Steuart explains himſelf afterwards by ſaying, that

certainly re-act upon each other, and are mutually neceſſary to each other's ſupport. This indeed ſeems to be the hinge on which the ſubject turns, and all the prejudices reſpecting population have, perhaps, ariſen from a miſtake about the order of precedence.

The author of *L'Ami des Hommes*, in a chapter on the effects of a decay of agriculture upon population, acknowledges that he had fallen into a fundamental error in conſidering population as the ſource of revenue; and that he was afterwards fully convinced that revenue was the ſource of population[a]. From a want of attention to this moſt important diſtinction, ſtateſmen, in purſuit of the deſirable object of population, have been led to encourage early marriages, to reward the fathers of families, and to diſgrace celibacy; but this, as the ſame author juſtly obſerves, is to dreſs and water a piece of land without ſowing it, and yet to expect a crop.

Among the other prejudices which have pre-

that he means principally the multiplication of thoſe perſons who have ſome valuable conſideration to give for the products of agriculture; but this is evidently not mere increaſe of population, and ſuch an explanation ſeems to admit the incorrectneſs of the general propoſition.

[a] Tom. viii. p. 84. 12mo. 9 vols. 1762.

vailed

vailed on the ſubject of population, it has been generally thought, that while there is either waſte among the rich, or land remaining uncultivated in any country, the complaints for want of food cannot be juſtly founded, or at leaſt that the preſſure of diſtreſs upon the poor is to be attributed to the ill conduct of the higher claſſes of ſociety, and the bad management of the land. The real effect however of theſe two circumſtances is merely to narrow the limit of the actual population; but they have little or no influence on what may be called the average preſſure of diſtreſs on the poorer members of ſociety. If our anceſtors had been ſo frugal and induſtrious, and had tranſmitted ſuch habits to their poſterity, that nothing ſuperfluous was now conſumed by the higher claſſes, no horſes were uſed for pleaſure, and no land was left uncultivated, a ſtriking difference would appear in the ſtate of the actual population; but probably none whatever, in the ſtate of the lower claſſes of people, with reſpect to the price of labour, and the facility of ſupporting a family. The waſte among the rich, and the horſes kept for pleaſure, have indeed a little the effect of the conſumption of grain in diſtilleries, noticed before with regard to China. On the

ſuppoſition that the food conſumed in this manner may be withdrawn on the occaſion of a ſcarcity, and be applied to the relief of the poor, they operate certainly as far as they go, like granaries which are only opened at the time that they are moſt wanted, and muſt therefore tend rather to benefit than to injure the lower claſſes of ſociety.

With regard to uncultivated land, it is evident, that its effect upon the poor is neither to injure nor to benefit them. The ſudden cultivation of it will indeed tend to improve their condition for a time, and the neglect of lands before cultivated will certainly make their ſituation worſe for a certain period; but when no changes of this kind are going forward, the effect of uncultivated land on the lower claſſes operates merely like the poſſeſſion of a ſmaller territory. It is indeed a point of very great importance to the poor, whether a country be in the habit of exporting or importing corn; but this point is not neceſſarily connected with the complete or incomplete cultivation of the whole territory, but depends upon the proportion of the ſurplus produce, to thoſe who are ſupported by it; and in fact this proportion is generally the greateſt, in countries which have not yet completed the cultivation

cultivation of all their territory. If every inch of land in this country were well cultivated, there would be no reaſon to expect, merely from this circumſtance, that we ſhould be able to export corn. Our power in this reſpect would depend entirely on the proportion of the ſurplus produce to the commercial population; and this, of courſe, would in its turn depend on the direction of capital to agriculture or commerce.

It is not probable that any country with a large territory ſhould ever be completely cultivated; and I am inclined to think that we often draw very inconſiderate concluſions againſt the induſtry and government of ſtates from the appearance of uncultivated lands in them. It ſeems to be the clear and expreſs duty of every government to remove all obſtacles, and give every facility to the incloſure and cultivation of land; but when this has been done, the reſt muſt be left to the operation of individual intereſt; and upon this principle it cannot be expected that any new land ſhould be brought into cultivation, the manure and the labour neceſſary for which, might be employed to greater advantage on the improvement of land already in cultivation; and this is a caſe which will very frequently occur. In countries poſſeſſed

of a large territory, there will always be a great quantity of land of a middling quality, which requires conſtant dreſſing to prevent it from growing worſe, but which would admit of very great improvement, if a greater quantity of manure and labour could be employed upon it. The great obſtacle to the melioration of land is the difficulty, the expence, and ſometimes the impoſſibility of procuring a ſufficient quantity of dreſſing. As this inſtrument of improvement, therefore, is in practice limited, whatever it may be in theory, the queſtion will always be, how it may be moſt profitably employed; and in any inſtance where a certain quantity of dreſſing and labour employed to bring new land into cultivation, would have yielded a permanently greater produce if employed upon old land, both the individual and the nation are loſers. Upon this principle, it is not uncommon for farmers in ſome ſituations never to dreſs their pooreſt land, but to get from it merely a ſcanty crop every three or four years, and to employ the whole of their manure, which they practically feel is limited, on thoſe parts of their farms, where it will produce a greater proportional effect.

The caſe will be different of courſe, in a ſmall

ſmall territory with a great population, ſupported on funds not derived from their own ſoil. In this caſe there will be little or no choice of land, and a comparative ſuperabundance of manure; and under ſuch circumſtances the pooreſt ſoils may be brought under cultivation. But for this purpoſe, it is not mere population that is wanted, but a population which can obtain the produce of other countries, while it is gradually improving its own; otherwiſe it would be immediately reduced in proportion to the limited produce of this ſmall and barren territory; and the melioration of the land might perhaps never take place; or if it did, it would take place very ſlowly indeed, and the population would always be exactly meaſured by this tardy rate, and could not poſſibly increaſe beyond it.

This ſubject is illuſtrated in the cultivation of the Campine in Brabant, which, according to the Abbé Mann[a], conſiſted originally of the moſt barren and arid ſand. Many attempts were made by private individuals to bring it under cultivation, but without ſucceſs; which

[a] Memoir on the Agriculture of the Netherlands, publiſhed in vol. i. of Communications to the Board of Agriculture, p. 225.

proves that, as a farming project, and considered as a sole dependence, the cultivation of it would not answer. Some religious houses however, at last settled there, and being supported by other funds, and improving the land merely as a secondary object, they by degrees, in the course of some centuries, brought nearly the whole under cultivation, letting it out to farmers as soon as it was sufficiently improved.

There is no spot, however barren, which might not be made rich this way, or by the concentrated population of a manufacturing town; but this is no proof whatever that with respect to population and food, population has the precedence, because this concentrated population could not possibly exist, without the preceding existence of an adequate quantity of food in the surplus produce of some other district.

In a country like Brabant or Holland, where territory is the principal want and not manure, such a district as the Campine is described to be, may perhaps be cultivated with advantage. But in countries possessed of a large territory, and with a considerable quantity of land of a middling quality, the attempt to cultivate such a spot, would be a palpable misdirection and waste

waſte, both of individual and national reſources.

The French have already found their error in bringing under cultivation too great a quantity of poor land. They are now ſenſible that they have employed in this way a portion of labour and dreſſing, which would have produced a permanently better effect, if it had been applied to the further improvement of better land. Even in China, which is ſo fully cultivated and ſo fully peopled, barren heaths have been noticed in ſome diſtricts, which prove that diſtreſſed as the people appear to be for ſubſiſtence, it does not anſwer to them to employ any of their manure on ſuch ſpots. Theſe remarks will be ſtill further confirmed, if we recollect, that in the cultivation of a large ſurface of bad land, there muſt neceſſarily be a very great waſte of ſeed corn.

We ſhould not therefore be too ready to make inferences againſt the internal economy of a country from the appearance of uncultivated heaths, without other evidence. But the fact is, that as no country has ever reached, or probably ever will reach, its higheſt poſſible acme of produce, it appears always as if the want of induſtry, or the ill-direction of that induſtry,

duſtry, was the actual limit to a further increaſe of produce and population, and not the abſolute refuſal of nature to yield any more; but a man who is locked up in a room may be fairly ſaid to be confined by the walls of it, though he may never touch them; and with regard to the principle of population, it is never the queſtion, whether a country will produce *any more*, but whether it may be made to produce a ſufficiency to keep pace with an unchecked increaſe of people. In China, the queſtion is not, whether a certain additional quantity of rice might be raiſed by improved culture, but whether ſuch an addition could be expected during the next twenty-five years, as would be ſufficient to ſupport an additional three hundred millions of people. And in this country, it is not the queſtion, whether by cultivating all our commons, we could raiſe conſiderably more corn than at preſent; but whether we could raiſe ſufficient for a population of twenty millions in the next twenty-five years, and forty millions in the next fifty years.

The allowing of the produce of the earth to be abſolutely unlimited, ſcarcely removes the weight of a hair from the argument, which depends

pends entirely upon the differently increaſing ratios of population and food: and all that the moſt enlightened governments, and the moſt perſevering and beſt guided efforts of induſtry can do, is to make the neceſſary checks to population operate more equably, and in a direction to produce the leaſt evil; but to remove them is a taſk abſolutely hopeleſs.

ESSAY, &c.

BOOK IV.

OF OUR FUTURE PROSPECTS RESPECTING THE REMOVAL OR MITIGATION OF THE EVILS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

CHAP. I.

Of moral reſtraint, and our obligation to practiſe this virtue.

As it appears that in the actual ſtate of every ſociety which has come within our review, the natural progreſs of population has been conſtantly and powerfully checked; and as it ſeems evident, that no improved form of government, no plans of emigration, no benevolent inſtitutions, and no degree or direction of national induſtry, can prevent the continued action of a great check to population in ſome form or other; it

it follows that we muſt ſubmit to it as an inevitable law of nature; and the only inquiry that remains is, how it may take place with the leaſt poſſible prejudice to the virtue and happineſs of human ſociety. All the immediate checks to population which have been obſerved to prevail in the ſame and different countries, ſeem to be reſolvable into moral reſtraint, vice, and miſery; and if our choice be confined to theſe three, we cannot long heſitate in our deciſion reſpecting which it would be moſt eligible to encourage.

In the firſt edition of this eſſay I obſerved, that as from the laws of nature it appeared, that ſome check to population muſt exiſt, it was better that this check ſhould ariſe from a foreſight of the difficulties attending a family, and the fear of dependent poverty, than from the actual preſence of want and ſickneſs. This idea will admit of being purſued further, and I am inclined to think that from the prevailing opinions reſpecting population, which undoubtedly originated in barbarous ages, and have been continued and circulated by that part of every community which may be ſuppoſed to be intereſted in their ſupport, we have been prevented from attending

attending to the clear dictates of reaſon and nature on this ſubject.

Natural and moral evil ſeem to be the inſtruments employed by the Deity in admoniſhing us to avoid any mode of conduct, which is not ſuited to our being, and will conſequently injure our happineſs. If we be intemperate in eating and drinking, we are diſordered; if we indulge the tranſports of anger, we ſeldom fail to commit acts of which we afterwards repent; if we multiply too faſt, we die miſerably of poverty and contagious diſeaſes. The laws of nature in all theſe caſes are ſimilar and uniform. They indicate to us, that we have followed theſe impulſes too far, ſo as to trench upon ſome other law which equally demands attention. The uneaſineſs we feel from repletion, the injuries that we inflict on ourſelves or others in anger, and the inconveniencies we ſuffer on the approach of poverty, are all admonitions to us to regulate theſe impulſes better; and if we heed not this admonition, we juſtly incur the penalty of our diſobedience, and our ſufferings operate as a warning to others.

From the inattention of mankind hitherto to the conſequences of increaſing too faſt, it muſt be preſumed that theſe conſequences are not ſo immediately

immediately and powerfully connected with the conduct which leads to them, as in the other inſtances; but the delayed knowledge of any particular effects does not alter their nature, nor our obligation to regulate our conduct accordingly, as ſoon as we are ſatisfied of what this conduct ought to be. In many other inſtances it has not been till after long and painful experience, that the conduct moſt favourable to the happineſs of man has been forced upon his attention. The kind of food, and the mode of preparing it, beſt ſuited to the purpoſes of nutrition and the gratification of the palate; the treatment and remedies of different diſorders; the bad effects on the human frame of low and marſhy ſituations; the invention of the moſt convenient and comfortable clothing; the conſtruction of good houſes; and all the advantages and extended enjoyments which diſtinguiſh civilized life, were not pointed out to the attention of man at once; but were the ſlow and late reſult of experience, and of the admonitions received by repeated failures.

Diſeaſes have been generally conſidered as the inevitable inflictions of Providence; but perhaps a great part of them may more juſtly be conſidered as indications that we have offended

againſt ſome of the laws of nature. The plague at Conſtantinople, and in other towns of the Eaſt, is a conſtant admonition of this kind to the inhabitants. The human conſtitution cannot ſupport ſuch a ſtate of filth and torpor; and as dirt, ſqualid poverty, and indolence, are in the higheſt degree unfavourable to happineſs and virtue, it ſeems a benevolent diſpenſation, that ſuch a ſtate ſhould by the laws of nature produce diſeaſe and death, as a beacon to others to avoid ſplitting on the ſame rock.

The prevalence of the plague in London till the year 1666, operated in a proper manner on the conduct of our anceſtors; and the removal of nuiſances, the conſtruction of drains, the widening of the ſtreets, and the giving more room and air to their houſes, had the effect of eradicating completely this dreadful diſorder, and of adding greatly to the health and happineſs of the inhabitants.

In the hiſtory of every epidemic it has almoſt invariably been obſerved, that the lower claſſes of people, whoſe food was poor and inſufficient, and who lived crowded together in ſmall and dirty houſes, were the principal victims. In what other manner can nature point out to us, that if we increaſe too faſt for the means of

ſubſiſtence, ſo as to render it neceſſary for a conſiderable part of the ſociety to live in this miſerable manner, we have offended againſt one of her laws. This law ſhe has declared exactly in the ſame manner, as ſhe declares that intemperance in eating and drinking will be followed by ill health, and that however grateful it may be to us at the moment to indulge theſe paſſions to exceſs, this indulgence will ultimately produce unhappineſs. It is as much a law of nature that repletion is bad for the human frame, as that eating and drinking, unattended with this conſequence, is good for it.

An implicit obedience to the impulſes of our natural paſſions would lead us into the wildeſt and moſt fatal extravagancies; and yet we have the ſtrongeſt reaſons for believing that all theſe paſſions are ſo neceſſary to our being, that they could not be generally weakened or diminiſhed, without injuring our happineſs. The moſt powerful and univerſal of all our deſires is the deſire of food, and of thoſe things, ſuch as clothing, houſes, &c. which are immediately neceſſary to relieve us from the pains of hunger and cold. It is acknowledged by all, that theſe deſires put in motion the greateſt part of that activity, from which the multiplied improve-

ments

ments and advantages of civilized life are derived; and that the purſuit of theſe objects, and the gratification of theſe deſires, form the principal happineſs of the larger half of mankind, civilized or uncivilized, and are indiſpenſably neceſſary to the more refined enjoyments of the other half. We are all conſcious of the ineſtimable benefits that we derive from theſe deſires, when directed in a certain manner; but we are equally conſcious of the evils reſulting from them, when not directed in this manner; ſo much ſo, that ſociety has taken upon itſelf to puniſh moſt ſeverely what it conſiders as an irregular gratification of them. And yet the deſires in both caſes are equally natural, and abſtractedly conſidered, equally virtuous. The act of the hungry man who ſatisfies his appetite by taking a loaf from the ſhelf of another, is in no reſpect to be diſtinguiſhed from the act of him who does the ſame thing with a loaf of his own, but by its conſequences. From the conſideration of theſe conſequences, we feel the moſt perfect conviction that if people were not prevented from gratifying their natural deſires with the loaves in the poſſeſſion of others, the number of loaves would univerſally diminiſh. This experience is the foundation of the

laws relating to property, and of the diſtinctions of virtue and vice, in the gratification of deſires, otherwiſe perfectly the ſame.

If the pleaſure ariſing from the gratification of theſe propenſities were univerſally diminiſhed in vividneſs, violations of property would become leſs frequent; but this advantage would be greatly overbalanced by the narrowing of the ſources of enjoyment. The diminution in the quantity of all thoſe productions which contribute to human gratification would be much greater in proportion than the diminution of thefts; and the loſs of general happineſs on the one ſide, would be beyond compariſon greater than the gain to happineſs on the other. When we contemplate the conſtant and ſevere toils of the greateſt part of mankind, it is impoſſible not to be forcibly impreſſed with the reflection that the ſources of human happineſs would be moſt cruelly diminiſhed, if the proſpect of a good meal, a warm houſe, and a comfortable fireſide in the evening, were not incitements ſufficiently vivid, to give intereſt and cheerfulneſs to the labours and privations of the day.

After the deſire of food, the moſt powerful and general of our deſires is the paſſion between

the ſexes, taken in an enlarged ſenſe. Of the happineſs ſpread over human life by this paſſion, very few are unconſcious. Virtuous love, exalted by friendſhip, ſeems to be that ſort of mixture of ſenſual and intellectual enjoyment, particularly ſuited to the nature of man, and moſt powerfully calculated to awaken the ſympathies of the ſoul, and produce the moſt exquiſite gratifications. Perhaps there is ſcarcely a man who has once experienced the genuine delight of virtuous love, however great his intellectual pleaſures may have been, that does not look back to the period as the ſunny ſpot in his whole life, where his imagination loves moſt to baſk, which he recollects and contemplates with the fondeſt regret, and which he would moſt wiſh to live over again.

It has been ſaid by Mr. Godwin, in order to ſhow the evident inferiority of the pleaſures of ſenſe, "Strip the commerce of the ſexes of all "its attendant circumſtances, and it would be "generally deſpiſed." He might as well ſay to a man who admired trees, ſtrip them of their ſpreading branches and lovely foliage, and what beauty can you ſee in a bare pole? But it was the tree with the branches and foliage, and not without them, that excited admiration. It is

" the ſymmetry of perſon, the vivacity, the vo-
" luptuous ſoftneſs of temper, the affectionate
" kindneſs of feeling, the imagination and the
" wit[a]" of a woman, which excite the paſſion of love, and not the mere diſtinction of her being a female.

It is a very great miſtake to ſuppoſe that the paſſion between the ſexes only operates and influences human conduct, when the immediate gratification of it is in contemplation. The formation and ſteady purſuit of ſome particular plan of life, has been juſtly conſidered as one of the moſt permanent ſources of happineſs; but I am inclined to believe that there are not many of theſe plans formed that are not connected in a conſiderable degree with the proſpect of the gratification of this paſſion, and with the ſupport of children ariſing from it. The evening meal, the warm houſe, and the comfortable fireſide, would loſe half of their intereſt, if we were to exclude the idea of ſome object of affection with whom they were to be ſhared.

We have alſo great reaſon to believe that the paſſion between the ſexes has the moſt powerful tendency to ſoften and meliorate the human character, and keep it more alive to all the

[a] Political Juſtice, vol. i. b. i. c. v. p. 72. 8vo.

kindlier emotions of benevolence and pity. Obſervations on ſavage life have generally tended to prove, that nations in which this paſſion appeared to be leſs vivid were diſtinguiſhed by a ferocious and malignant ſpirit, and particularly by tyranny and cruelty to the ſex. If indeed this bond of conjugal affection were conſiderably weakened, it ſeems probable, either that the man would make uſe of his ſuperior phyſical ſtrength and turn his wife into a ſlave, as among the generality of ſavages, or at beſt, that every little inequality of temper which muſt neceſſarily occur between two perſons, would produce a total alienation of affection; and this could hardly take place, without a diminution of parental fondneſs and care, which would have the moſt fatal effect on the happineſs of ſociety.

It may be further remarked, that obſervations on the human character in different countries warrant us in the concluſion, that the paſſion is ſtronger, and its general effects in producing gentleneſs, kindneſs, and ſuavity of manners, much more powerful, where obſtacles are thrown in the way of very early and univerſal gratification. In ſome of the ſouthern countries where every impulſe may be almoſt immediately indulged, the paſſion ſinks into mere animal de-

ſire, is ſoon weakened and almoſt extinguiſhed by exceſs; and its influence on the character is extremely confined. But in European countries, where, though the women be not ſecluded, yet manners have impoſed conſiderable reſtraints on this gratification, the paſſion not only riſes in force, but in the univerſality and beneficial tendency of its effects, and has often the moſt influence in the formation and improvement of the character where it is the leaſt gratified.

Conſidering then the paſſion between the ſexes in all its bearings and relations, and including the endearing engagement of parent and child reſulting from it, few will be diſpoſed to deny that it is one of the principal ingredients of human happineſs. Yet experience teaches us that much evil flows from the irregular gratification of it; and though the evil be of little weight in the ſcale, when compared with the good, yet its abſolute quantity cannot be inconſiderable, on account of the ſtrength and univerſality of the paſſion. It is evident however, from the general conduct of all governments in their diſtribution of puniſhments, that the evil reſulting from this cauſe is not ſo great and ſo immediately dangerous to ſociety, as the irregular gratification of the deſire of property; but placing

placing this evil in the moſt formidable point of view, we ſhould evidently purchaſe a diminution of it at a very dear price, by the extinction or diminution of the paſſion which cauſes it; a change, which would probably convert human life, either into a cold and cheerleſs blank, or a ſcene of ſavage and mercileſs ferocity.

A careful attention to the remote as well as immediate effects of all the human paſſions, and all the general laws of nature, leads us ſtrongly to the concluſion, that under the preſent conſtitution of things, few or none of them would admit of being greatly diminiſhed, without narrowing the ſources of good, more powerfully than the ſources of evil. And the reaſon ſeems to be obvious. They are, in fact, the materials of all our pleaſures, as well as of all our pains; of all our happineſs, as well as of all our miſery; of all our virtues, as well as of all our vices. It muſt therefore be regulation and direction that are wanted, not diminution or extinction.

It is juſtly obſerved by Dr. Paley, that "Human paſſions are either neceſſary to human welfare, or capable of being made, and in a great majority of inſtances, in fact, made conducive to its happineſs. Theſe paſſions are ſtrong and general; and perhaps would not anſwer

" anſwer their purpoſe, unleſs they were ſo. " But ſtrength and generality, when it is expe- " dient that particular circumſtances ſhould be " reſpected, become, if left to themſelves, exceſs " and miſdirection. From which exceſs and " miſdirection the vices of mankind (the cauſes " no doubt of much miſery) appear to ſpring. " This account, while it ſhows us the principle " of vice, ſhows us at the ſame time, the pro- " vince of reaſon and ſelf-government[a]."

Our virtue therefore, as reaſonable beings, evidently conſiſts in educing from the general materials which the Creator has placed under our guidance, the greateſt ſum of human happineſs; and as our natural impulſes are abſtractedly conſidered good, and only to be diſtinguiſhed by their conſequences, a ſtrict attention to theſe conſequences, and the regulation of our conduct conformably to them, muſt be conſidered as our principal duty.

The fecundity of the human ſpecies is, in ſome reſpects, a diſtinct conſideration from the paſſion between the ſexes, as it evidently depends more upon the power of women in bearing children, than upon the ſtrength or weakneſs of this paſſion. It is however a law ex-

[a] Natural Theology, c. xxvi. p. 547.

actly

actly ſimilar in its great features to all the other laws of nature. It is ſtrong and general, and apparently would not admit of any very conſiderable diminution, without being inadequate to its object; the evils ariſing from it are incidental to theſe neceſſary qualities of ſtrength and generality; and theſe evils are capable of being very greatly mitigated, and rendered comparatively light by human energy and virtue. We cannot but conceive that it is an object of the Creator that the earth ſhould be repleniſhed, and it appears to me clear that this could not be effected without a tendency in population to increaſe faſter than food; and as with the preſent law of increaſe, the peopling of the earth does not proceed very rapidly, we have undoubtedly ſome reaſon to believe that this law is not too powerful for its apparent object. The deſire of the means of ſubſiſtence would be comparatively confined in its effects, and would fail of producing that general activity ſo neceſſary to the improvement of the human faculties, were it not for the ſtrong and univerſal effort of population, to increaſe with greater rapidity than its ſupplies. If theſe two tendencies were exactly balanced, I do not ſee what motive there would be,

be ſufficiently ſtrong to overcome the acknowledged indolence of man, and make him proceed in the cultivation of the ſoil. The population of any large territory, however fertile, would be as likely to ſtop at five hundred, or five thouſand, as at five millions, or fifty millions. Such a balance therefore, would clearly defeat one great purpoſe of creation; and if the queſtion be merely a queſtion of degree, a queſtion of a little more or a little leſs ſtrength, we may fairly diſtruſt our competence to judge of the preciſe quantity neceſſary to anſwer the object with the ſmalleſt ſum of incidental evil. In the preſent ſtate of things we appear to have under our guidance a great power, capable of peopling a deſert region in a ſmall number of years; and yet under other circumſtances, capable of being confined by human energy and virtue to any limits however narrow, at the expence of a ſmall comparative quantity of evil. The analogy of all the other laws of nature would be completely violated, if in this inſtance alone, there were no proviſion for accidental failures, no reſources againſt the vices of mankind, or the partial miſchiefs reſulting from other general laws. To effect the apparent object without any attendant evil, it is evident that a perpetual change

change in the law of increaſe would be neceſſary, varying with the varying circumſtances of each country. But inſtead of this, it is not only more conſonant to the analogy of the other parts of nature, but we have reaſon to think, that it is more conducive to the formation and improvement of the human mind, that the law ſhould be uniform, and the evils incidental to it, under certain circumſtances, be left to be mitigated or removed by man himſelf. His duties in this caſe vary with his ſituation; and he is thus kept more alive to the conſequences of his actions, and his faculties have evidently greater play and opportunity of improvement, than if the evil were removed by a perpetual change of the law according to circumſtances.

Even if from paſſions too eaſily ſubdued, or the facility of illicit intercourſe, a ſtate of celibacy were a matter of indifference, and not a ſtate of ſome privation, the end of nature in the peopling of the earth would be apparently liable to be defeated. It is of the very utmoſt importance to the happineſs of mankind, that they ſhould not increaſe too faſt; but it does not appear that the object to be accompliſhed would admit of any very conſiderable diminution in the deſire of marriage. It is clearly the duty of each

each individual not to marry till he has a proſpect of ſupporting his children; but it is at the ſame time to be wiſhed that he ſhould retain undiminiſhed his deſire of marriage, in order that he may exert himſelf to realize this proſpect, and be ſtimulated to make proviſion for the ſupport of greater numbers.

It is evidently therefore, regulation and direction that is required with regard to the principle of population, not diminution or alteration. And if moral reſtraint be the only virtuous mode of avoiding the incidental evils ariſing from this principle, our obligation to practiſe it will evidently reſt exactly upon the ſame foundation, as our obligation to practiſe any of the other virtues, the foundation of utility.

Whatever indulgence we may be diſpoſed to allow to occaſional failures in the diſcharge of a duty of acknowledged difficulty; yet of the ſtrict line of duty, we cannot doubt. Our obligation not to marry till we have a fair proſpect of being able to ſupport our children, will appear to deſerve the attention of the moraliſt, if it can be proved, that an attention to this obligation is of more effect in the prevention of miſery, than all the other virtues combined; and that if in violation of this duty, it were the general

general cuſtom to follow the firſt impulſe of nature, and marry at the age of puberty, the univerſal prevalence of every known virtue, in the greateſt conceivable degree, would fail of reſcuing ſociety from the moſt wretched and deſperate ſtate of want, and all the diſeaſes and famines which uſually accompany it.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the Effects which would reſult to Society from the prevalence of this virtue.

ONE of the principal reaſons which has prevented an aſſent to the doctrine of the conſtant tendency of population to increaſe beyond the means of ſubſiſtence, is a great unwillingneſs to believe, that the Deity would by the laws of nature bring beings into exiſtence, which by the laws of nature could not be ſupported in that exiſtence. But if in addition to that general activity and direction of our induſtry put in motion by theſe laws, we further conſider, that the incidental evils ariſing from them are conſtantly directing our attention to the proper check to population, moral reſtraint; and if it appear, that by a ſtrict obedience to thoſe duties which are pointed out to us by the light of nature and reaſon, and are confirmed and ſanctioned by revelation, theſe evils may be avoided, the objection will, I truſt, be removed, and all apparent imputation on the goodneſs of the Deity be done away.

The

The heathen moraliſts never repreſented happineſs as attainable on earth, but through the medium of virtue; and among their virtues prudence ranked in the firſt claſs, and by ſome was even conſidered as including every other. The chriſtian religion places our preſent as well as future happineſs in the exerciſe of thoſe virtues which tend to fit us for a ſtate of ſuperior enjoyment; and the ſubjection of the paſſions to the guidance of reaſon, which, if not the whole, is a principal branch of prudence, is in conſequence moſt particularly inculcated.

If for the ſake of illuſtration, we might be permitted to draw a picture of ſociety, in which each individual endeavoured to attain happineſs by the ſtrict fulfilment of thoſe duties, which the moſt enlightened of the antient philoſophers deduced from the laws of nature, and which have been directly taught, and received ſuch powerful ſanctions in the moral code of Chriſtianity, it would preſent a very different ſcene from that which we now contemplate. Every act which was prompted by the deſire of immediate gratification, but which threatened an ultimate overbalance of pain, would be conſidered as a breach of duty; and conſequently no man whoſe earnings were only ſufficient to maintain

two children, would put himſelf in a ſituation in which he might have to maintain four or five, however he might be prompted to it by the paſſion of love. This prudential reſtraint, if it were generally adopted, by narrowing the ſupply of labour in the market, would, in the natural courſe of things, ſoon raiſe its price. The period of delayed gratification would be paſſed in ſaving the earnings which were above the wants of a ſingle man, and in acquiring habits of ſobriety, induſtry, and economy, which would enable him in a few years to enter into the matrimonial contract without fear of its conſequences. The operation of the preventive check in this way, by conſtantly keeping the population within the limits of the food, though conſtantly following its increaſe, would give a real value to the riſe of wages, and the ſums ſaved by labourers before marriage, very different from thoſe forced advances in the price of labour, or arbitrary parochial donations, which, in proportion to their magnitude and extenſiveneſs, muſt of neceſſity be followed by a proportional advance in the price of proviſions. As the wages of labour would thus be ſufficient to maintain with decency a large family, and as every married couple would ſet out with a ſum

for contingencies, all ſqualid poverty would be removed from ſociety, or at leaſt, be confined to a very few, who had fallen into misfortunes againſt which no prudence or foreſight could provide.

The interval between the age of puberty and the period at which each individual might venture on marriage muſt, according to the ſuppoſition, be paſſed in ſtrict chaſtity; becauſe the law of chaſtity cannot be violated without producing evil. The effect of any thing like a promiſcuous intercourſe which prevents the birth of children, is evidently to weaken the beſt affections of the heart, and in a very marked manner to degrade the female character. And any other intercourſe would, without improper arts, bring as many children into the ſociety as marriage, with a much greater probability of their becoming a burden to it.

Theſe conſiderations ſhow that the virtue of chaſtity is not, as ſome have ſuppoſed, a forced produce of artificial ſociety; but that it has the moſt real and ſolid foundation in nature and reaſon; being apparently the only virtuous mean of avoiding the vice and miſery which reſult ſo often from the principle of population.

In ſuch a ſociety as we have been ſuppoſing,

it might be neceſſary for both ſexes to paſs many of the early years of life in the ſingle ſtate; and if this were general, there would certainly be room for a much greater number to marry afterwards, ſo that fewer, upon the whole, would be condemned to paſs their lives in celibacy. If the cuſtom of not marrying early prevailed generally, and if violations of chaſtity were equally diſhonourable in both ſexes, a more familiar and friendly intercourſe between them might take place without danger. Two young people might converſe together intimately without its being immediately ſuppoſed that they either intended marriage or intrigue; and a much better opportunity would thus be given to both ſexes of finding out kindred diſpoſitions, and of forming thoſe ſtrong and laſting attachments, without which the married ſtate is generally more productive of miſery than of happineſs. The earlier years of life would not be ſpent without love, though without the full gratification of it. The paſſion inſtead of being extinguiſhed, as it now too frequently is by early ſenſuality, would only be repreſſed for a time, that it might afterwards burn with a brighter, purer, and ſteadier flame; and the happineſs of the married ſtate, inſtead of an opportunity of immediate

immediate indulgence, would be looked forward to as the prize of induſtry and virtue, and the reward of a genuine and conſtant attachment[a].

The paſſion of love is a powerful ſtimulus in the formation of character, and often prompts to the moſt noble and generous exertions; but this is only when the affections are centered in one object; and generally, when full gratification is delayed by difficulties[b]. The heart

[a] Dr. Currie, in his intereſting obſervations on the character and condition of the Scotch peaſantry, which he has prefixed to his life of Burns, remarks, with a juſt knowledge of human nature, that "in appreciating the happineſs and virtue "of a community, there is perhaps no ſingle criterion on "which ſo much dependence may be placed as the ſtate of "the intercourſe between the ſexes. Where this diſplays "ardour of attachment, accompanied by purity of conduct, "the character and the influence of women riſe, our imper-"fect nature mounts in the ſcale of moral excellence; and "from the ſource of this ſingle affection, a ſtream of felicity "deſcends, which branches into a thouſand rivulets that en-"rich and adorn the field of life. Where the attachment "between the ſexes ſinks into an appetite, the heritage of "our ſpecies is comparatively poor, and man approaches to "the condition of the brutes that periſh." Vol. i. p. 18.

[b] Dr. Currie obſerves, that the Scottiſh peaſant in the courſe of his paſſion, often exerts a ſpirit of adventure, of which a Spaniſh cavalier need not be aſhamed. Burns' Works, vol. i. p. 16. It is not to be doubted, that this kind of romantic paſſion which Dr. C. ſays, characterizes the at-

heart is perhaps never ſo much diſpoſed to virtuous conduct, and certainly at no time is the virtue of chaſtity ſo little difficult to men, as when under the influence of ſuch a paſſion. Late marriages taking place in this way would be very different from thoſe of the ſame name at preſent, where the union is too frequently prompted ſolely by intereſted views, and the parties meet not unfrequently with exhauſted conſtitutions, and generally with exhauſted affections. The late marriages at preſent are indeed principally confined to the men; and there are few, however advanced in life they may be, who if they determine to marry, do not fix their choice on a very young wife. A young woman without fortune, when ſhe has paſſed her twenty-fifth year, begins to fear, and with reaſon, that ſhe may lead a life of celibacy; and with a heart capable of forming a ſtrong attachment, feels as each year creeps on, her hopes of finding an object on which to reſt her affections gradually diminiſhing, and the uneaſineſs of her ſituation aggravated by the ſilly and un-

tachments of the humbleſt people of Scotland, and which has been greatly foſtered by the elevation of mind given to them by a ſuperior education, has had a moſt powerful and moſt beneficial influence on the national character.

juſt

juſt prejudices of the world. If the general age of marriage among women were later, the period of youth and hope would be prolonged, and fewer would be ultimately diſappointed.

That a change of this kind would be a moſt decided advantage to the more virtuous half of ſociety, we cannot for a moment doubt. However impatiently the privation might be borne by the men, it would be ſupported by the women readily and cheerfully; and if they could look forwards with juſt confidence to marriage at twenty-eight or thirty, I fully believe that if the matter were left to their free choice, they would clearly prefer waiting till this period, to the being involved in all the cares of a large family at twenty-five. The moſt eligible age of marriage however, could not be fixed; but muſt depend entirely on circumſtances and ſituation. There is no period of human life at which nature more ſtrongly prompts to an union of the ſexes, than from ſeventeen or eighteen to twenty. In every ſociety above that ſtate of depreſſion which almoſt excludes reaſon and foreſight, theſe early tendencies muſt neceſſarily be reſtrained; and if in the actual ſtate of things, ſuch a reſtraint on the impulſes of nature be found unavoidable, at what time can we be

conſiſtently releaſed from it, but at that period, whatever it may be, when, in the exiſting circumſtances of the ſociety, a fair proſpect preſents itſelf of maintaining a family.

The difficulty of moral reſtraint will perhaps be objected to this doctrine. To him who does not acknowledge the authority of the Chriſtian religion, I have only to ſay, that after the moſt careful inveſtigation, this virtue appears to be abſolutely neceſſary, in order to avoid certain evils which would otherwiſe reſult from the general laws of nature. According to his own principles, it is his duty to purſue the greateſt good conſiſtent with theſe laws; and not to fail in this important end, and produce an overbalance of miſery, by a partial obedience to ſome of the dictates of nature while he neglects others. The path of virtue, though it be the only path which leads to permanent happineſs, has always been repreſented by the heathen moraliſts as of difficult aſcent.

To the Chriſtian I would ſay, that the ſcriptures moſt clearly and preciſely point it out to us as our duty, to reſtrain our paſſions within the bounds of reaſon; and it is a palpable diſobedience of this law, to indulge our deſires in ſuch a manner as reaſon tells us will unavoidably end

end in miſery. The Chriſtian cannot conſider the difficulty of moral reſtraint as any argument againſt its being his duty; ſince in almoſt every page of the ſacred writings, man is deſcribed as encompaſſed on all ſides by temptations, which it is extremely difficult to reſiſt; and though no duties are enjoined which do not contribute to his happineſs on earth as well as in a future ſtate, yet an undeviating obedience is never repreſented as an eaſy taſk.

There is in general ſo ſtrong a tendency to love in early youth, that it is extremely difficult at this period to diſtinguiſh a genuine from a tranſient paſſion. If the earlier years of life were paſſed by both ſexes in moral reſtraint, from the greater facility that this would give to the meeting of kindred diſpoſitions, it might even admit of a doubt whether more happy marriages would not take place, and conſequently more pleaſure from the paſſion of love, than in a ſtate ſuch as that of America, the circumſtances of which would allow of a very early union of the ſexes. But if we compare the intercourſe of the ſexes in ſuch a ſociety as I have been ſuppoſing, with that which now exiſts in Europe, taken under all its circumſtances, it may ſafely be aſſerted, that independently of the load

of

of miſery which would be removed, the ſum of pleaſurable ſenſations from the paſſion of love would be increaſed in a very great degree.

If we could ſuppoſe ſuch a ſyſtem general, the acceſſion of happineſs to ſociety in its internal economy, would ſcarcely be greater than in its external relations. It might fairly be expected that war, that great peſt of the human race, would, under ſuch circumſtances, ſoon ceaſe to extend its ravages ſo widely and ſo frequently, as it does at preſent.

One of its firſt cauſes and moſt powerful impulſes, was undoubtedly an inſufficiency of room and food; and greatly as the circumſtances of mankind have changed ſince it firſt began, the ſame cauſe ſtill continues to operate and to produce, though in a ſmaller degree, the ſame effects. The ambition of princes would want inſtruments of deſtruction, if the diſtreſſes of the lower claſſes of people did not drive them under their ſtandards. A recruiting ſerjeant always prays for a bad harveſt, and a want of employment, or in other words, a redundant population.

In the earlier ages of the world, when war was the great buſineſs of mankind, and the drains

drains of population from this cauſe were, beyond compariſon, greater than in modern times, the legiſlators and ſtateſmen of each country, adverting principally to the means of offence and defence, encouraged an increaſe of people in every poſſible way, fixed a ſtigma on barrenneſs and celibacy, and honoured marriage. The popular religions followed theſe prevailing opinions. In many countries the prolific power of nature was the object of ſolemn worſhip. In the religion of Mahomet, which was eſtabliſhed by the ſword, and the promulgation of which, in conſequence, could not be unaccompanied by an extraordinary deſtruction of its followers, the procreation of children to glorify the Creator was laid down as one of the principal duties of man; and he who had the moſt numerous offſpring, was conſidered as having beſt anſwered the end of his creation. The prevalence of ſuch moral ſentiments had naturally a great effect in encouraging marriage; and the rapid procreation which followed was partly the effect and partly the cauſe of inceſſant war. The vacancies occaſioned by former deſolations made room for the rearing of freſh ſupplies; and the overflowing rapidity with which theſe ſupplies followed, conſtantly furniſhed freſh incitements and

and freſh inſtruments for renewed hoſtilities. Under the influence of ſuch moral ſentiments it is difficult to conceive how the fury of inceſſant war ſhould ever abate.

It is a pleaſing confirmation of the truth and divinity of the Chriſtian religion, and of its being adapted to a more improved ſtate of human ſociety, that it places our duties reſpecting marriage and the procreation of children, in a different light from that in which they were before beheld.

Without entering minutely into the ſubject, which would evidently lead too far, I think it will be admitted, that if we apply the ſpirit of St. Paul's declarations reſpecting marriage to the preſent ſtate of ſociety, and the known conſtitution of our nature, the natural inference ſeems to be, that when marriage does not interfere with higher duties, it is right; when it does, it is wrong. According to the genuine principles of moral ſcience, "The method of coming at "the will of God from the light of nature, is to "inquire into the tendency of the action to "promote or diminiſh the general happineſs[a]." There are perhaps few actions that tend ſo directly to diminiſh the general happineſs, as to

[a] Paley's Moral Philoſophy, vol. i. b. ii. c. iv. p. 65.

marry

marry without the means of ſupporting children. He who commits this act therefore, clearly offends againſt the will of God; and having become a burden on the ſociety in which he lives, and plunged himſelf and family into a ſituation in which virtuous habits are preſerved with more difficulty than in any other, he appears to have violated his duty to his neighbours and to himſelf, and thus to have liſtened to the voice of paſſion in oppoſition to his higher obligations.

In a ſociety, ſuch as I have ſuppoſed, all the members of which endeavour to attain happineſs by obedience to the moral code derived from the light of nature, and enforced by ſtrong ſanctions in revealed religion, it is evident that no ſuch marriages could take place; and the prevention of a redundant population, in this way, would remove one of the principal encouragements to offenſive war; and at the ſame time tend powerfully to eradicate thoſe two fatal political diſorders, internal tyranny and internal tumult, which mutually produce each other.

Indiſpoſed to a war of offence, in a war of defence, ſuch a ſociety would be ſtrong as a rock of adamant. Where every family poſſeſſed the

the neceſſaries of life in plenty, and a decent portion of its comforts and conveniencies, there could not exiſt that hope of change, or at beſt that melancholy and diſheartening indifference to it, which ſometimes prompts the lower claſſes of people to ſay, "let what will come we can-"not be worſe off than we are now." Every heart and hand would be united to repel an invader, when each individual felt the value of the ſolid advantages which he enjoyed, and a proſpect of change preſented only a proſpect of being deprived of them.

As it appears therefore, that it is in the power of each individual to avoid all the evil conſequences to himſelf and ſociety reſulting from the principle of population, by the practice of a virtue clearly dictated to him by the light of nature, and expreſsly enjoined in revealed religion; and as we have reaſon to think, that the exerciſe of this virtue to a certain degree, would rather tend to increaſe than diminiſh individual happineſs; we can have no reaſon to impeach the juſtice of the Deity, becauſe his general laws make this virtue neceſſary, and puniſh our offences againſt it by the evils attendant upon vice, and the pains that accompany the various forms of premature death. A really virtuous

ſociety,

ſociety, ſuch as I have ſuppoſed, would avoid theſe evils. It is the apparent object of the Creator to deter us from vice by the pains which accompany it, and to lead us to virtue by the happineſs that it produces. This object appears to our conceptions to be worthy of a benevolent Creator. The laws of nature reſpecting population tend to promote this object. No imputation therefore, on the benevolence of the Deity, can be founded on theſe laws, which is not equally applicable to any of the evils neceſſarily incidental to an imperfect ſtate of exiſtence.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the only effectual mode of improving the condition of the Poor.

He who publiſhes a moral code, or ſyſtem of duties, however firmly he may be convinced of the ſtrong obligation on each individual ſtrictly to conform to it, has never the folly to imagine that it will be univerſally or even generally practiſed. But this is no valid objection againſt the publication of the code. If it were, the ſame objection would always have applied; we ſhould be totally without general rules; and to the vices of mankind ariſing from temptation, would be added a much longer liſt than we have at preſent, of vices from ignorance.

Judging merely from the light of nature, if we feel convinced of the miſery ariſing from a redundant population on the one hand, and of the evils and unhappineſs, particularly to the female ſex, ariſing from promiſcuous intercourſe, on the other, I do not ſee how it is poſſible for any perſon who acknowledges the principle of utility

utility as the great foundation of morals, to eſcape the concluſion, that moral reſtraint, or the abſtaining from marriage till we are in a condition to ſupport a family, with a perfectly moral conduct during that period, is the ſtrict line of duty; and when revelation is taken into the queſtion, this duty undoubtedly receives very powerful confirmation. At the ſame time I believe that few of my readers can be leſs ſanguine in their expectations of any great change in the general conduct of men on this ſubject than I am; and the chief reaſon why in the laſt chapter I allowed myſelf to ſuppoſe the univerſal prevalence of this virtue was, that I might endeavour to remove any imputation on the goodneſs of the Deity, by ſhowing that the evils ariſing from the principle of population were exactly of the ſame nature as the generality of other evils which excite fewer complaints, that they were increaſed by human ignorance and indolence, and diminiſhed by human knowledge and virtue; and on the ſuppoſition that each individual ſtrictly fulfilled his duty, would be almoſt totally removed; and this, without any general diminution of thoſe ſources of pleaſure, ariſing from the regulated indulgence of the paſſions, which have been

juſtly conſidered as the principal ingredients of human happineſs.

If it will anſwer any purpoſe of illuſtration, I ſee no harm in drawing the picture of a ſociety in which each individual is ſuppoſed ſtrictly to fulfil his duties; nor does a writer appear to be juſtly liable to the imputation of being viſionary, unleſs he make ſuch univerſal or general obedience neceſſary to the practical utility of his ſyſtem, and to that degree of moderate and partial improvement, which is all that can rationally be expected from the moſt complete knowledge of our duties.

But, in this reſpect, there is an eſſential difference between that improved ſtate of ſociety which I have ſuppoſed in the laſt chapter, and moſt of the other ſpeculations on this ſubject. The improvement there ſuppoſed, if we ever ſhould make approaches towards it, is to be effected in the way in which we have been in the habit of ſeeing all the greateſt improvements effected, by a direct application to the intereſt and happineſs of each individual. It is not required of us to act from motives to which we are unaccuſtomed, to purſue a general good which we may not diſtinctly comprehend, or the effect of which may be weakened by diſtance

tance and diffuſion. The happineſs of the whole is to be the reſult of the happineſs of individuals, and to begin firſt with them. No co-operation is required. Every ſtep tells. He who performs his duty faithfully will reap the full fruits of it, whatever may be the number of others who fail. This duty is expreſs and intelligible to the humbleſt capacity. It is merely that he is not to bring beings into the world for whom he cannot find the means of ſupport. When once this ſubject is cleared from the obſcurity thrown over it by parochial laws and private benevolence, every man muſt feel the ſtrongeſt conviction of ſuch an obligation. If he cannot ſupport his children they muſt ſtarve; and if he marry in the face of a fair probability that he ſhall not be able to ſupport his children, he is guilty of all the evils which he thus brings upon himſelf, his wife, and his offspring. It is clearly his intereſt, and will tend greatly to promote his happineſs, to defer marrying, till by induſtry and economy he is in a capacity to ſupport the children that he may reaſonably expect from his marriage; and as he cannot in the mean time gratify his paſſions, without violating an expreſs command of God, and running a great riſk of injuring himſelf,

ſelf, or ſome of his fellow creatures, conſiderations of his own intereſt and happineſs will dictate to him the ſtrong obligation to a moral conduct while he remains unmarried.

However powerful may be the impulſes of paſſion, they are generally in ſome degree modified by reaſon. And it does not ſeem entirely viſionary to ſuppoſe, that if the true and permanent cauſe of poverty were clearly explained, and forcibly brought home to each man's boſom, it would have ſome, and perhaps not an inconſiderable influence on his conduct: at leaſt the experiment has never yet been fairly tried. Almoſt every thing that has been hitherto done for the poor has tended, as if with ſolicitous care, to throw a veil of obſcurity over this ſubject, and to hide from them the true cauſe of their poverty. When the wages of labour are hardly ſufficient to maintain two children, a man marries and has five or ſix. He of courſe finds himſelf miſerably diſtreſſed. He accuſes the inſufficiency of the price of labour to maintain a family. He accuſes his pariſh for their tardy and ſparing fulfilment of their obligation to aſſiſt him. He accuſes the avarice of the rich, who ſuffer him to want what they can ſo well ſpare. He accuſes the partial and unjuſt inſti-

tutions

tutions of ſociety, which have awarded him an inadequate ſhare of the produce of the earth. He accuſes perhaps the diſpenſations of Providence, which have aſſigned to him a place in ſociety ſo beſet with unavoidable diſtreſs and dependance. In ſearching for objects of accuſation, he never adverts to the quarter from which all his misfortunes originate. The laſt perſon that he would think of accuſing is himſelf, on whom in fact the principal blame lies, except in as far as he has been deceived by the higher claſſes of ſociety. He may perhaps wiſh that he had not married, becauſe he now feels the inconveniencies of it; but it never enters into his head that he can have done any thing wrong. He has always been told that to raiſe up ſubjects for his king and country is a very meritorious act. He has done this act, and yet is ſuffering for it. He naturally thinks that he is ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake; and it cannot but ſtrike him as moſt extremely unjuſt and cruel in his king and country, to allow him thus to ſuffer, in return for giving them what they are continually declaring that they particularly want.

Till theſe erroneous ideas have been corrected, and the language of nature and reaſon

has been generally heard on the ſubject of population, inſtead of the language of error and prejudice, it cannot be ſaid that any fair experiment has been made with the underſtandings of the common people; and we cannot juſtly accuſe them of improvidence and want of induſtry, till they act as they do now, after it has been brought home to their comprehenſions, that they are themſelves the cauſe of their own poverty; that the means of redreſs are in their own hands, and in the hands of no other perſons whatever; that the ſociety in which they live, and the government which preſides over it, are without any direct power in this reſpect; and however ardently they may deſire to relieve them, and whatever attempts they may make to do ſo, are really and truly unable to execute what they benevolently wiſh, but unjuſtly promiſe; that when the wages of labour will not maintain a family, it is an incontrovertible ſign that their king and country do not want more ſubjects, or at leaſt that they cannot ſupport them; that if they marry in this caſe, ſo far from fulfilling a duty to ſociety, they are throwing a uſeleſs burden on it, at the ſame time that they are plunging themſelves into diſtreſs; and that they are acting directly contrary

trary to the will of God, and bringing down upon themſelves various diſeaſes, which might all, or the greater part, have been avoided, if they had attended to the repeated admonitions which he gives by the general laws of nature, to every being capable of reaſon.

Dr. Paley in his Moral Philoſophy, obſerves, that "in countries in which ſubſiſtence is be-"come ſcarce, it behoves the ſtate to watch "over the public morals with increaſed ſolici-"tude; for nothing but the inſtinct of nature, "under the reſtraint of chaſtity, will induce "men to undertake the labour, or conſent to "the ſacrifice of perſonal liberty and indul-"gence, which the ſupport of a family in ſuch "circumſtances requires[a]." That it is always the duty of a ſtate to uſe every exertion likely to be effectual in diſcouraging vice and promoting virtue, and that no temporary circumſtances ought to cauſe any relaxation in theſe exertions is certainly true. The means therefore propoſed are always good; but the particular end in view in this caſe, appears to be abſolutely criminal. We wiſh to force people into marriage, when from the acknowledged ſcarcity of ſubſiſtence, they will have little

[a] Vol. ii. c. xi. p. 352.

chance of being able to ſupport their children. We might as well force people into the water who are unable to ſwim. In both caſes we raſhly tempt Providence. Nor have we more reaſon to believe, that a miracle will be worked to ſave us from the miſery and mortality reſulting from our conduct in the one caſe, than in the other.

The object of thoſe who really wiſh to better the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety, muſt be to raiſe the relative proportion between the price of labour and the price of proviſions, ſo as to enable the labourer to command a larger ſhare of the neceſſaries and comforts of life. We have hitherto principally attempted to attain this end by encouraging the married poor, and conſequently increaſing the number of labourers, and overſtocking the market with a commodity which we ſtill ſay that we wiſh to be dear. It would ſeem to have required no great ſpirit of divination to foretell the certain failure of ſuch a plan of proceeding. There is nothing however like experience. It has been tried in many different countries, and for many hundred years, and the ſucceſs has always been anſwerable to the nature of the ſcheme. It is really time now to try ſomething elſe.

When

When it was found that oxygene, or pure vital air, would not cure conſumptions, as was expected, but rather aggravated their ſymptoms; a trial was made of an air of the moſt oppoſite kind. I wiſh we had acted with the ſame philoſophical ſpirit in our attempts to cure the diſeaſe of poverty; and having found that the pouring in of freſh ſupplies of labour only tended to aggravate the ſymptoms, had tried what would be the effect of withholding a little theſe ſupplies.

In all old and fully-peopled ſtates it is from this method, and this alone, that we can rationally expect any eſſential and permanent melioration in the condition of the lower claſſes of people.

In an endeavour to raiſe the proportion of the quantity of proviſions to the number of conſumers in any country, our attention would naturally be firſt directed to the increaſing of the abſolute quantity of proviſions; but finding that as faſt as we did this, the number of conſumers more than kept pace with it, and that with all our exertions we were ſtill as far as ever behind, we ſhould be convinced that our efforts directed only in this way would never ſucceed. It would appear to be ſetting the tortoiſe to catch

the hare. Finding therefore, that from the laws of nature we could not proportion the food to the population, our next attempt ſhould naturally be to proportion the population to the food. If we can perſuade the hare to go to ſleep the tortoiſe may have ſome chance of overtaking her.

We are not however to relax our efforts in increaſing the quantity of proviſions; but to combine another effort with it, that of keeping the population when once it has been overtaken, at ſuch a diſtance behind as to effect the relative proportion which we deſire; and thus unite the two grand deſiderata, a great actual population and a ſtate of ſociety, in which ſqualid poverty and dependence are comparatively but little known; two objects which are far from being incompatible.

If we be really ſerious in what appears to be the object of ſuch general reſearch, the mode of eſſentially and permanently bettering the condition of the poor, we muſt explain to them the true nature of their ſituation, and ſhow them that the withholding of the ſupplies of labour is the only poſſible way of really riſing its price; and that they themſelves being the poſſeſſors of

this

this commodity have alone the power to do this.

I cannot but conſider this mode of diminiſhing poverty, as ſo perfectly clear in theory, and ſo invariably confirmed by the analogy of every other commodity that is brought to market, that nothing but its being ſhown to be calculated to produce greater evils than it propoſes to remedy, can juſtify us in not making the attempt to put it into execution.

CHAP. IV.

Objections to this mode conſidered.

ONE objection which perhaps will be made to this plan, is that from which alone it derives its value—a market rather underſtocked with labour. This muſt undoubtedly take place in a certain degree; but by no means in ſuch a degree as to affect the wealth and proſperity of the country. The way in which we are going on at preſent, and the enormous increaſe in the price of proviſions, which ſeems to threaten us, will tend much more effectually to enable foreigners to underſell us in the markets of Europe than the plan now propoſed. If the population of this country were better proportioned to its food, the nominal price of labour might be lower than it is now, and yet be ſufficient to maintain a wife and ſix children. But putting this ſubject of a market underſtocked with labour, in the moſt unfavourable point of view, if the rich will not ſubmit to a ſlight inconvenience neceſſarily attendant on the attainment

ment of what they profeſs to deſire, they cannot really be in earneſt in their profeſſions. Their benevolence to the poor muſt be either childiſh play or hypocriſy; it muſt be either to amuſe themſelves or to pacify the minds of the common people with a mere ſhow of attention to their wants. To wiſh to better the condition of the poor by enabling them to command a greater quantity of the neceſſaries and comforts of life, and then to complain of high wages, is the act of a ſilly boy who gives away his cake and then cries for it. A market overſtocked with labour, and an ample remuneration to each labourer, are objects perfectly incompatible with each other. In the annals of the world they never exiſted together; and to couple them even in imagination betrays a groſs ignorance of the ſimpleſt principles of political economy.

A ſecond objection that may be made to this plan is, the diminution of population that it would cauſe. It is to be conſidered however, that this diminution is merely relative; and when once this relative diminution had been effected, by keeping the population ſtationary, while the ſupply of food had increaſed, it might then ſtart afreſh, and continue increaſing for ages, with the

increaſe

increaſe of food, maintaining always the ſame relative proportion to it. I can eaſily conceive, that this country, with a proper direction of the national induſtry, might, in the courſe of ſome centuries, contain two or three times its preſent population, and yet every man in the kingdom be much better fed and clothed than he is at preſent. While the ſprings of induſtry continue in vigour, and a ſufficient part of that induſtry is directed to agriculture, we need be under no apprehenſions of a deficient population; and nothing perhaps would tend ſo ſtrongly to excite a ſpirit of induſtry and economy among the poor, as a thorough knowledge that their happineſs muſt always depend principally upon themſelves; and that if they obey their paſſions in oppoſition to their reaſon, or be not induſtrious and frugal while they are ſingle men, to ſave a ſum for the common contingencies of the married ſtate, they muſt expect to ſuffer the natural evils which Providence has prepared for thoſe who diſobey its repeated admonitions.

A third objection which may be ſtarted to this plan, and the only one which appears to me to have any kind of plauſibility is, that by endeavouring to urge the duty of moral reſtraint

on

on the poor, we may increaſe the quantity of vice relating to the ſex.

I ſhould be extremely ſorry to ſay any thing, which could either directly or remotely be conſtrued unfavourably to the cauſe of virtue; but I certainly cannot think that the vices which relate to the ſex, are the only vices which are to be conſidered in a moral queſtion; or that they are even the greateſt and moſt degrading to the human character. They can rarely or never be committed without producing unhappineſs ſomewhere or other, and therefore ought always to be ſtrongly reprobated; but there are other vices, the effects of which are ſtill more pernicious; and there are other ſituations which lead more certainly to moral offences than the refraining from marriage. Powerful as may be the temptations to a breach of chaſtity, I am inclined to think that they are impotent, in compariſon of the temptations ariſing from continued diſtreſs. A large claſs of women, and many men, I have no doubt, paſs a conſiderable part of their lives in chaſtity; but I believe there will be found very few who paſs through the ordeal of ſqualid and hopeleſs poverty, or even of long continued embarraſſed circumſtances,

ces, without a conſiderable moral degradation of character.

In the higher and middle claſſes of ſociety, it is a melancholy and diſtreſſing ſight to obſerve, not unfrequently, a man of a noble and ingenuous diſpoſition, once feelingly alive to a ſenſe of honour and integrity, gradually ſinking under the preſſure of circumſtances, making his excuſes at firſt with a bluſh of conſcious ſhame, afraid of ſeeing the faces of his friends from whom he may have borrowed money, reduced to the meaneſt tricks and ſubterfuges to delay or avoid the payment of his juſt debts; till ultimately grown familiar with falſehood, and at enmity with the world, he loſes all the grace and dignity of man.

To the general prevalence of indigence, and the extraordinary encouragements which we afford in this country to a total want of foreſight and prudence among the common people[a], is

[a] Mr. Colquhoun, ſpeaking of the poor laws, obſerves, that "in ſpite of all the ingenious arguments which have been "uſed in favour of a ſyſtem, admitted to be wiſely conceived "in its origin, the effects it has produced inconteſtably prove, "that with reſpect to the maſs of the poor, there is ſome-"thing radically wrong in the execution. If it were not ſo, it

is to be attributed the principal part of thoſe continual depredations on property, and other more atrocious crimes, which drive us to the painful reſource of ſuch a number of executions[a]. According to Mr. Colquhoun, above twenty thouſand miſerable individuals of various claſſes riſe up every morning without knowing how or by what means they are to be ſupported during the paſſing day, or where in many inſtances, they are to lodge on the ſucceeding night[b]. It is by theſe unhappy perſons that the principal depredations on the public are committed; and ſuppoſing but few of them to be married, and driven to theſe acts, from the neceſſity of ſupporting their children; yet ſtill it will not ceaſe to be true, that the too great frequency of

" it is impoſſible that there could exiſt in the metropolis ſuch " an inconceivable portion of human miſery amidſt examples " of munificence and benevolence unparalleled in any age or " country." Police of Metropolis, c. xiii. p. 359.

In the effects of the poor laws, I fully agree with Mr. Colquhoun; but I cannot agree with him in admitting that the ſyſtem was well conceived in its origin. I attribute ſtill more evil to the original ill conception, than to the ſubſequent ill execution.

[a] Mr. Colquhoun obſerves, that " Indigence in the preſent " ſtate of ſociety, may be conſidered as a principal cauſe of " the increaſe of crimes." Police of Metropolis, c. xiii. p. 352.

[b] Id. c. xi. p. 313.

marriage among the pooreſt claſſes is one of the principal cauſes of the temptations to theſe crimes. A conſiderable part of theſe unhappy wretches will probably be found to be the offſpring of ſuch marriages, educated in workhouſes where every vice is propagated, or bred up at home in filth and rags, and with an utter ignorance of every moral obligation[a]. A ſtill greater part perhaps conſiſts of perſons who being unable for ſome time to get employment owing to the full ſupply of labour, have been urged to theſe extremities by their temporary wants, and having thus loſt their characters, are rejected, even when their labour may be wanted, by the well-founded caution of civil ſociety[b].

When

[a] Police of Metropolis, c. xi. xii. p. 355, 370.

[b] Police of the Metropolis, c. xiii. p. 353 et ſeq. In ſo large a town as London, which muſt neceſſarily encourage a prodigious influx of ſtrangers from the country, there muſt be always a great many perſons out of work; and it is probable that ſome public inſtitution for the relief of the caſual poor, upon a plan ſimilar to that propoſed by Mr. Colquhoun (c. xiii. p. 371.) would, under very judicious management, produce more good than evil. But for this purpoſe it would be abſolutely neceſſary, that if work were provided by the inſtitution, the ſum that a man could earn by it ſhould be leſs than the worſt paid common labour; otherwiſe the claimants would rapidly increaſe, and the funds would ſoon be inade-

quate

When indigence does not produce overt acts of vice, it palſies every virtue. Under the continued temptations to a breach of chaſtity, occaſional failures may take place, and the moral ſenſibility in other reſpects, not be very ſtrikingly impaired; but the continued temptations which

quate to their object. In the inſtitution at Hamburgh, which appears to have been the moſt ſucceſsful of any yet eſtabliſhed, the nature of the work was ſuch, that though paid above the uſual price, a perſon could not eaſily earn by it more than eighteen pence a week. It was the determined principle of the managers of the inſtitution to reduce the ſupport which they gave, lower than what any induſtrious man or woman in ſuch circumſtances could earn. (Account of the management of the poor in Hamburgh, by C. Voght, p. 18.) And it is to this principle that they attribute their ſucceſs. It ſhould be obſerved however, that neither the inſtitution at Hamburgh, nor that planned by Count Rumford in Bavaria, has ſubſiſted long enough for us to be able to pronounce on their permanent good effects. It will not admit of a doubt that inſtitutions for the relief of the poor, on their firſt eſtabliſhment, remove a great quantity of diſtreſs. The only queſtion is, whether, as ſucceeding generations ariſe, the increaſing funds neceſſary for their ſupport, and the increaſing numbers that become dependent, are not greater evils than that which was to be remedied; and whether the country will not ultimately be left with as much mendicity as before, beſides all the poverty and dependence accumulated in the public inſtitutions. This ſeems to be nearly the caſe in England at preſent. I do not believe that we ſhould have more beggars if we had no poor laws.

beſet hopeleſs poverty, and the ſtrong ſenſe of injuſtice that generally accompanies it from an ignorance of its true cauſe, tend ſo powerfully to ſour the diſpoſition, to harden the heart, and deaden the moral ſenſe, that, generally ſpeaking, virtue takes her flight clear away from the tainted ſpot, and does not often return.

Even with reſpect to the vices which relate to the ſex, marriage has been found to be by no means a complete remedy. Among the higher claſſes, our Doctors Commons, and the lives that many married men are known to lead, ſufficiently prove this; and the ſame kind of vice, though not ſo much heard of among the lower claſſes of people, owing to their indifference and want of delicacy on theſe ſubjects, is probably not very much leſs frequent.

Add to this, that ſqualid poverty, particularly when joined with idleneſs, is a ſtate the moſt unfavourable to chaſtity that can well be conceived. The paſſion is as ſtrong, or nearly ſo, as in other ſituations, and every reſtraint on it from perſonal reſpect, or a ſenſe of morality is generally removed. There is a degree of ſqualid poverty, in which, if a girl was brought up, I ſhould ſay that her being really modeſt at twenty was an abſolute miracle. Thoſe perſons muſt

muſt have extraordinary minds indeed, and ſuch as are not uſually formed under ſimilar circumſtances, who can continue to reſpect themſelves, when no other perſon whatever reſpects them. If the children thus brought up were even to marry at twenty, it is probable that they would have paſſed ſome years in vicious habits before that period.

If after all, however, theſe arguments ſhould appear inſufficient; if we reprobate the idea of endeavouring to encourage the virtue of moral reſtraint among the poor, from a fear of producing vice; and if we think that to facilitate marriage by all poſſible means is a point of the firſt conſequence to the morality and happineſs of the people, let us act conſiſtently, and before we proceed, endeavour to make ourſelves acquainted with the mode by which alone we can effect our object.

CHAP. V.

Of the conſequences of purſuing the oppoſite mode.

It is an evident truth, that whatever may be the rate of increaſe in the means of ſubſiſtence, the increaſe of population muſt be limited by it, at leaſt after the food has once been divided into the ſmalleſt ſhares that will ſupport life. All the children born beyond what would be required to keep up the population to this level, muſt neceſſarily periſh, unleſs room be made for them by the deaths of grown perſons. It has appeared indeed, clearly in the courſe of this work, that in all old ſtates the marriages and births depend principally upon the deaths, and that there is no encouragement to early unions ſo powerful as a great mortality. To act conſiſtently therefore, we ſhould facilitate, inſtead of fooliſhly and vainly endeavouring to impede, the operations of nature in producing this mortality; and if we dread the too frequent viſitation of the horrid form of famine, we ſhould ſedulouſly encourage the other forms of deſtruction which we

we compel nature to uſe. Inſtead of recommending cleanlineſs to the poor, we ſhould encourage contrary habits. In our towns, we ſhould make the ſtreets narrower, crowd more people into the houſes, and court the return of the plague. In the country, we ſhould build our villages near ſtagnant pools, and particularly encourage ſettlements in all marſhy and unwholeſome ſituations[a]. But above all, we ſhould reprobate ſpecific remedies for ravaging diſeaſes, and thoſe benevolent, but much miſtaken men, who have thought they were doing a ſervice to mankind by projecting ſchemes for the total extirpation of particular diſorders. If by theſe and ſimilar means, the annual mortality were increaſed from 1 in 36 or 40, to 1 in 18 or 20,

[a] Necker, ſpeaking of the proportion of the births in France, makes uſe of a new and inſtructive expreſſion on this ſubject, though he hardly ſeems to be ſufficiently aware of it himſelf. He ſays, "Le nombre des naiſſances eſt a celui des habitans "de un a vingt-trois et vingt-quatre dans les lieux *contrariés par* "*la nature, ou par des circonſtances morales:* ce meme rapport "dans la plus grande partie de la France, eſt de un a 25, 25 ½, "& 26." Adminiſt. des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 254. 12mo. It would appear therefore, that we had nothing more to do, than to ſettle people in marſhy ſituations, and oppreſs them by a bad government, in order to attain what politicians have hitherto conſidered as ſo deſireable—a great proportion of marriages and a great proportion of births.

we might probably every one of us marry at the age of puberty, and yet few be abſolutely ſtarved.

If however, we all marry at this age, and yet ſtill continue our exertions to impede the operations of nature, we may reſt aſſured that all our efforts will be vain. Nature will not, nor cannot be defeated in her purpoſes. The neceſſary mortality muſt come, in ſome form or other; and the extirpation of one diſeaſe will only be the ſignal for the birth of another perhaps more fatal. We cannot lower the waters of miſery by preſſing them down in different places, which muſt neceſſarily make them riſe ſomewhere elſe: the only way in which we can hope to effect our purpoſe is by drawing them off. To this courſe nature is conſtantly directing our attention by the chaſtiſements which await a contrary conduct. Theſe chaſtiſements are more or leſs ſevere, in proportion to the degree in which her admonitions produce their intended effect. In this country at preſent, theſe admonitions are by no means entirely neglected. The preventive check to population prevails to a conſiderable degree, and her chaſtiſements are in conſequence moderate: but if we were all to marry at the age of puberty they would be ſevere

vere indeed. Political evils would probably be added to phyſical. A people goaded by conſtant diſtreſs, and viſited by frequent returns of famine, could not be kept down by a cruel deſpotiſm. We ſhould approach to the ſtate of the people in Egypt or Abyſſinia; and I would aſk, whether in that caſe it is probable that we ſhould be more virtuous?

Phyſicians have long remarked the great changes which take place in diſeaſes; and that, while ſome appear to yield to the efforts of human care and ſkill, others ſeem to become in proportion more malignant and fatal. Dr. William Heberden publiſhed not long ſince, ſome valuable obſervations on this ſubject deduced from the London bills of mortality. In his preface, ſpeaking of theſe bills, he ſays, "the "gradual changes they exhibit in particular "diſeaſes, correſpond to the alterations which "in time are known to take place, in the "channels through which the great ſtream of "mortality is conſtantly flowing[a]." In the body of his work afterwards, ſpeaking of ſome particular diſeaſes, he obſerves with that candour which always diſtinguiſhes true ſcience:

[a] Obſervations on the Increaſe and Decreaſe of different Diſeaſes. Preface, p. v. 4to. 1801.

"It

" It is not eaſy to give a ſatisfactory reaſon for " all the changes which may be obſerved to " take place in the hiſtory of diſeaſes. Nor is " it any diſgrace to phyſicians, if their cauſes " are often ſo gradual in their operation, or ſo " ſubtle as to elude inveſtigation[a]."

I hope I ſhall not be accuſed of preſumption, in venturing to ſuggeſt, that under certain circumſtances, ſuch changes muſt take place; and perhaps without any alteration in thoſe proximate cauſes which are uſually looked to on theſe occaſions. If this ſhould appear to be true, it will not ſeem extraordinary that the moſt ſkilful and ſcientific phyſicians, whoſe buſineſs it is principally to inveſtigate proximate cauſes, ſhould ſometimes ſearch for theſe cauſes in vain.

In a country which keeps its population at a certain ſtandard, if the average number of marriages and births be given, it is evident that the average number of deaths will alſo be given; and to uſe Dr. Heberden's metaphor, the channels through which the great ſtream of mortality is conſtantly flowing, will always convey off a given quantity. Now if we ſtop up any

[a] Obſervations on the Increaſe and Decreaſe of different Diſeaſes, p. 43. 4to. 1801.

of

of theſe channels, it is moſt perfectly clear that the ſtream of mortality muſt run with greater force through ſome of the other channels; that is, if we eradicate ſome diſeaſes, others will become proportionally more fatal. In this caſe the only diſtinguiſhable cauſe is the damning up a neceſſary outlet of mortality[a]. Nature, in the attainment of her great purpoſes, ſeems always to ſeize upon the weakeſt part. If this part be made ſtrong by human ſkill, ſhe ſeizes upon the next weakeſt part, and ſo on in ſucceſſion; not like a capricious deity, with an intention to ſport with our ſufferings, and conſtantly to defeat our labours; but like a kind though ſometimes ſevere inſtructor, with the intention of teaching us to make all parts ſtrong, and to chace vice and miſery from the earth. In avoiding one fault we are too apt to run into ſome other; but we always find nature faithful to her great object, at every falſe ſtep we commit, ready to admoniſh us of our errors, by the infliction of ſome phyſical or moral evil. If the prevalence of the preventive check to population in a ſufficient degree, were to remove many

[a] The way in which it operates is probably by increaſing poverty, in conſequence of a ſupply of labour too rapid for the demand.

of

of thoſe diſeaſes which now afflict us, yet be accompanied by a conſiderable increaſe of the vice of promiſcuous intercourſe, it is probable that the diſorders and unhappineſs, the phyſical and moral evils ariſing from this vice, would increaſe in ſtrength and degree, and admoniſhing us ſeverely of our error, would point to the only line of conduct approved by nature, reaſon, and religion, abſtinence from marriage till we can ſupport our children and chaſtity till that period arrives.

In the caſe juſt ſtated, in which the population and the number of marriages are ſuppoſed to be fixed, the neceſſity of a change in the mortality of ſome diſeaſes, from the diminution or extinction of others, is capable of mathematical demonſtration. The only obſcurity which can poſſibly involve this ſubject, ariſes from taking into conſideration the effect that might be produced by a diminution of mortality in increaſing the population, or in decreaſing the number of marriages. That the removal of any of the particular cauſes of mortality can have no further effect upon population than the means of ſubſiſtence will allow; and that it has little influence on theſe means of ſubſiſtence is a fact, of which I hope the reader is already convinced.

Of

Of its operation in tending to prevent marriage, by diminiſhing the demand for freſh ſupplies of children, I have no doubt; and there is reaſon to think that it had this effect, in no inconſiderable degree, on the extinction of the plague, which had ſo long and ſo dreadfully ravaged this country. Dr. Heberden draws a ſtriking picture of the favourable change obſerved in the health of the people of England ſince this period; and juſtly attributes it to the improvements which have gradually taken place, not only in London but in all great towns; and in the manner of living throughout the kingdom, particularly with reſpect to cleanlineſs and ventilation[a]. But theſe cauſes would not have produced the effect obſerved, if they had not been accompanied by an increaſe of the preventive check; and probably the ſpirit of cleanlineſs, and better mode of living, which then began to prevail, by ſpreading more generally a decent and uſeful pride, principally contributed to this increaſe. The diminution in the number of marriages however, was not ſufficient to make up for the great decreaſe of mortality, from the extinction of the plague, and the ſtriking reduction of the deaths in the dyſentery[b]. While theſe, and

[a] Obſerv. on Inc. and Dec. of Diſeaſes, p. 35. [b] Id. p. 34.

ſome

ſome other diſorders became almoſt evaneſcent, conſumption, palſy, apoplexy, gout, lunacy, and the ſmall-pox, became more mortal[a]. The widening of theſe drains was neceſſary to carry off the population which ſtill remained redundant, notwithſtanding the increaſed operation of the preventive check, and the part which was annually diſpoſed of and enabled to ſubſiſt by the increaſe of agriculture.

Dr. Haygarth, in the ſketch of his benevolent plan for the extermination of the caſual ſmall-pox, draws a frightful picture of the mortality which has been occaſioned by this diſtemper, attributes to it the ſlow progreſs of population, and makes ſome curious calculations on the favourable effects which would be produced in this reſpect by its extermination[b]. His concluſions however, I fear, would not follow from his premiſes. I am far from doubting that millions and millions of human beings have been deſtroyed by the ſmall-pox. But were its devaſtations, as Dr. Haygarth ſuppoſes, many thouſand degrees greater than the plague[c], I ſhould ſtill doubt whether the average population of the earth had been diminiſhed by them. The ſmall-pox is certainly one of the channels, and a very

[a] Obſerv. on Inc. and Dec. of Diſeaſes, p. 36 et ſeq.

[b] Vol. i. part ii. ſect. v. and vi. [c] Id. ſ. viii. p. 164.

broad

broad one, which nature has opened for the laſt thouſand years, to keep down the population to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence; but had this been cloſed, others would have become wider, or new ones would have been formed. In antient times the mortality from war and the plague was incomparably greater than in modern. On the gradual diminution of this ſtream of mortality, the generation, and almoſt univerſal prevalence of the ſmall-pox is a great and ſtriking inſtance of one of thoſe changes in the channels of mortality, which ought to awaken our attention, and animate us to patient and perſevering inveſtigation. For my own part, I feel not the ſlighteſt doubt, that if the introduction of the cow-pox ſhould extirpate the ſmall-pox, and yet the number of marriages continue the ſame, we ſhall find a very perceptible difference in the increaſed mortality of ſome other diſeaſes. Nothing could prevent this effect but a ſudden ſtart in our agriculture; and ſhould this take place, which I fear we have not much reaſon to expect, it will not be owing to the number of children ſaved from death by the cow-pox inoculation, but to the alarms occaſioned among the people of property by the late ſcarcities, and to the increaſed gains of farmers, which have been ſo abſurdly repro-

bated. I am ſtrongly however inclined to believe, that the number of marriages will not, in this caſe, remain the ſame; but that the gradual light which may be expected to be thrown on this intereſting topic of human inquiry, will teach us how to make the extinction of a mortal diſorder, a real bleſſing to us, a real improvement in the general health and happineſs of the ſociety.

If, on contemplating the increaſe of vice which might contingently follow an attempt to inculcate the duty of moral reſtraint, and the increaſe of miſery that muſt neceſſarily follow the attempts to encourage marriage and population, we come to the concluſion, not to interfere in any reſpect, but to leave every man to his own free choice, and reſponſible only to God for the evil which he does in either way; this is all I contend for; I would on no account do more; but I contend that at preſent we are very far from doing this.

Among the lower claſſes, where the point is of the greateſt importance, the poor laws afford a direct, conſtant, and ſyſtematical encouragement to marriage, by removing from each individual that heavy reſponſibility which he would incur by the laws of nature, for bringing beings into the world which he could not ſupport. Our private

private benevolence has the ſame direction as the poor laws, and almoſt invariably tends to facilitate the rearing of families, and to equalize as much as poſſible, the circumſtances of married and ſingle men.

Among the higher claſſes of people, the ſuperior diſtinctions which married women receive, and the marked inattentions to which ſingle women of advanced age are expoſed, enable many men who are neither agreeable in mind or perſon, and are beſides in the wane of life, to chooſe a partner among the young and fair inſtead of being confined, as nature ſeems to dictate, to perſons of nearly their own age and accompliſhments. It is ſcarcely to be doubted, that the fear of being an old maid, and of that ſilly and unjuſt ridicule which folly ſometimes attaches to this name, drives many women into the marriage union with men whom they diſlike, or at beſt to whom they are perfectly indifferent. Such marriages muſt to every delicate mind appear little better than legal proſtitutions; and they often burden the earth with unneceſſary children, without compenſating for it by an acceſſion of happineſs and virtue to the parties themſelves.

Throughout all the ranks of ſociety, the pre-

vailing opinions reſpecting the duty and obligation of marriage, cannot but have a very powerful influence. The man who thinks that in going out of the world without leaving repreſentatives behind him, he ſhall have failed in an important duty to ſociety, will be diſpoſed to force rather than to repreſs his inclinations on this ſubject; and when his reaſon repreſents to him the difficulties attending a family, he will endeavour not to attend to theſe ſuggeſtions, will ſtill determine to venture, and will hope that in the diſcharge of what he conceives to be his duty, he ſhall not be deſerted by Providence.

In a civilized country, ſuch as England, where a taſte for the decencies and comforts of life prevail among a very large claſs of people, it is not poſſible that the encouragements to marriage from poſitive inſtitutions and prevailing opinions, ſhould entirely obſcure the light of nature and reaſon on this ſubject; but ſtill they contribute to make it comparatively weak and indiſtinct. And till this obſcurity is entirely removed, and the poor are undeceived with reſpect to the principal cauſe of their paſt poverty, and taught to know

know that their future happineſs or miſery muſt depend chiefly upon themſelves, it cannot be ſaid, that with regard to the great queſtion of marriage, we leave every man to his own free and fair choice.

CHAP. VI.

Effects of the knowledge of the principal cauſe of poverty on Civil Liberty.

It may appear, perhaps, that a doctrine which attributes the greateſt part of the ſufferings of the lower claſſes of ſociety excluſively to themſelves, is unfavourable to the cauſe of liberty, as affording a tempting opportunity to governments of oppreſſing their ſubjects at pleaſure, and laying the whole blame on the laws of nature and the imprudence of the poor. We are not however to truſt to firſt appearances; and I am ſtrongly diſpoſed to believe that thoſe who will be at the pains to conſider this ſubject deeply will be convinced, that nothing would ſo powerfully contribute to the advancement of rational freedom, as a thorough knowledge generally circulated of the principal cauſe of poverty; and that the ignorance of this cauſe, and the natural conſequences of this ignorance form at preſent one of the chief obſtacles to its progreſs.

The preſſure of diſtreſs on the lower claſſes of

of people, with the habit of attributing this diſtreſs to their rulers, appears to me to be the rock of defence, the caſtle, the guardian ſpirit of deſpotiſm. It affords to the tyrant the fatal and unanſwerable plea of neceſſity. It is the reaſon that every free government tends conſtantly to its deſtruction; and that its appointed guardians become daily leſs jealous of the encroachments of power. It is the reaſon that ſo many noble efforts in the cauſe of freedom have failed, and that almoſt every revolution, after long and painful ſacrifices, has terminated in a military deſpotiſm. While any diſſatisfied man of talents has power to perſuade the lower claſſes of people that all their poverty and diſtreſs ariſe ſolely from the iniquity of the government, though perhaps the greateſt part of what they ſuffer is unconnected with this cauſe, it is evident that the ſeeds of freſh diſcontents and freſh revolutions are continually ſowing. When an eſtabliſhed government has been deſtroyed, finding that their poverty is not removed, their reſentment naturally falls upon the ſucceſſors to power; and when theſe have been immolated without producing the deſired effect, other ſacrifices are called for, and ſo on without end. Are we to be ſurpriſed, that under ſuch circum-

ſtances, the majority of well-diſpoſed people, finding that a government with proper reſtrictions was unable to ſupport itſelf againſt the revolutionary ſpirit, and weary and exhauſted with perpetual change to which they could ſee no end, ſhould give up the ſtruggle in deſpair, and throw themſelves into the arms of the firſt power which could afford them protection againſt the horrors of anarchy.

A mob, which is generally the growth of a redundant population goaded by reſentment for real ſufferings, but totally ignorant of the quarter from which they originate, is of all monſters the moſt fatal to freedom. It foſters a prevailing tyranny, and engenders one where it was not; and though, in its dreadful fits of reſentment, it appears occaſionally to devour its unſightly offspring; yet no ſooner is the horrid deed committed, than however unwilling it may be to propagate ſuch a breed, it immediately groans with a new birth.

Of the tendency of mobs to produce tyranny, we may not be long without an example in this country. As a friend to freedom, and naturally an enemy to large ſtanding armies, it is with extreme reluctance that I am compelled to acknowledge, that had it not been for the great organized

organized force in the country, the diſtreſſes of the people during the late ſcarcities, encouraged by the extreme ignorance and folly of many among the higher claſſes, might have driven them to commit the moſt dreadful outrages, and ultimately to involve the country in all the horrors of famine. Should ſuch periods often recur, a recurrence which we have too much reaſon to apprehend from the preſent ſtate of the country, the proſpect which opens to our view is melancholy in the extreme. The Engliſh conſtitution will be ſeen haſtening with rapid ſtrides to the *Euthanaſia* foretold by Hume, unleſs its progreſs be interrupted by ſome popular commotion; and this alternative preſents a picture ſtill more appalling to the imagination. If political diſcontents were blended with the cries of hunger, and a revolution were to take place by the inſtrumentality of a mob clamouring for want of food, the conſequences would be unceaſing change and unceaſing carnage, the bloody career of which nothing but the eſtabliſhment of ſome complete deſpotiſm could arreſt.

We can ſcarcely believe that the appointed guardians of Britiſh liberty ſhould quietly have acquieſced in thoſe gradual encroachments of

power which have taken place of late years, but from the apprehenſion of theſe ſtill more dreadful evils. Great as has been the influence of corruption, I cannot yet think ſo meanly of the country gentlemen of England as to believe that they would thus have given up a part of their birthright of liberty, if they had not been actuated by a real and genuine fear, that it was then in greater danger from the people than from the crown. They appeared to ſurrender themſelves to government on condition of being protected from the mob; but they never would have made this melancholy and diſheartening ſurrender, if ſuch a mob had not exiſted either in reality or in imagination. That the fears on this ſubject were artfully exaggerated and increaſed beyond the limits of juſt apprehenſion is undeniable; but I think it is alſo undeniable, that the frequent declamation which was heard againſt the unjuſt inſtitutions of ſociety, and the deluſive arguments on equality which were circulated among the lower claſſes, gave us juſt reaſon to ſuppoſe that if the *vox populi* had been allowed to ſpeak it would have appeared to be the voice of error and abſurdity, inſtead of the *vox Dei*.

To ſay that our conduct is not to be regulated by

by circumſtances, is to betray an ignorance of the moſt ſolid and incontrovertible principles of morality. Though the admiſſion of this principle may ſometimes afford a cloke to changes of opinion that do not reſult from the pureſt motives; yet the admiſſion of a contrary principle would be productive of infinitely worſe conſequences. The phraſe of exiſting circumſtances has, I believe, not unfrequently created a ſmile in the Engliſh Houſe of Commons; but the ſmile ſhould have been reſerved for the application of the phraſe, and not have been excited by the phraſe itſelf. A very frequent repetition of it has indeed, of itſelf, rather a ſuſpicious air; and its application ſhould always be watched with the moſt jealous and anxious attention; but no man ought to be judged *in limine* for ſaying, that exiſting circumſtances had obliged him to alter his opinions and conduct. The country gentlemen were perhaps too eaſily convinced that exiſting circumſtances called upon them to give up ſome of the moſt valuable privileges of Engliſhmen; but as far as they were really convinced of this obligation, they acted conſiſtently with the cleareſt rule of morality.

The degree of power to be given to the civil government,

government, and the meaſure of our ſubmiſſion to it, muſt be determined by general expediency; and in judging of this expediency, every circumſtance is to be taken into conſideration; particularly the ſtate of public opinion, and the degree of ignorance and deluſion prevailing among the common people. The patriot who might be called upon by the love of his country to join with heart and hand in a riſing of the people for ſome ſpecific attainable object or reform, if he knew that they were enlightened reſpecting their own ſituation, and would ſtop ſhort when they had attained their demand, would be called upon by the ſame motive to ſubmit to very great oppreſſion rather than give the ſlighteſt countenance to a popular tumult, the members of which, at leaſt the greater number of them, were perſuaded that the deſtruction of the Parliament, the Lord Mayor, and the monopolizers, would make bread cheap, and that a revolution would enable them all to ſupport their families. In this caſe it is more the ignorance and deluſion of the lower claſſes of people that occaſions the oppreſſion, than the actual diſpoſition of the government to tyranny.

That there is however in all power a conſtant

ſtant tendency to encroach is an incontrovertible truth, and cannot be too ſtrongly inculcated. The checks which are neceſſary to ſecure the liberty of the ſubject will always, in ſome degree, embarraſs and delay the operations of the executive government. The members of this government feeling theſe inconveniences, while they are exerting themſelves, as they conceive, in the ſervice of their country, and conſcious perhaps of no ill intention towards the people, will naturally be diſpoſed on every occaſion, to demand the ſuſpenſion or abolition of theſe checks; but if once the convenience of miniſters be put into competition with the liberties of the people, and we get into a habit of relying on fair aſſurances and perſonal character, inſtead of examining, with the moſt ſcrupulous and jealous care, the merits of each particular caſe, there is an end of Britiſh freedom. If we once admit the principle, that the government muſt know better with regard to the quantity of power which it wants, than we can poſſibly do with our limited means of information, and that therefore it is our duty to ſurrender up our private judgments, we may juſt as well at the ſame time ſurrender up the whole of our conſtitution. Government is a quarter in which liberty

berty is not, nor cannot be very faithfully preſerved. If we are wanting to ourſelves, and inattentive to our great intereſts in this reſpect, it is the height of folly and unreaſonableneſs to expect that government will attend to them for us. Should the Britiſh conſtitution ultimately lapſe into a deſpotiſm, as has been propheſied, I ſhall think that the country gentlemen of England will have really much more to anſwer for than the miniſters.

To do the country gentlemen juſtice, however, I ſhould readily acknowledge, that in the partial deſertion of their poſts as guardians of Britiſh freedom which has already taken place, they have been actuated more by fear than corruption. And the principal reaſon of this fear was, I conceive, the ignorance and deluſions of the common people, and the proſpective horrors which were contemplated, if in ſuch a ſtate of mind, they ſhould by any revolutionary movement obtain an aſcendant.

The circulation of Paine's Rights of Man, it is ſuppoſed, has done great miſchief among the lower and middling claſſes of people in this country. This is probably true; but not becauſe man is without rights, or that theſe rights ought not to be known; but becauſe Mr. Paine has

has fallen into ſome fundamental errors reſpecting the principles of government, and in many important points has ſhown himſelf totally unacquainted with the ſtructure of ſociety, and the different moral effects to be expected from the phyſical difference between this country and America. Mobs of the ſame deſcription as thoſe collections of people known by this name in Europe could not exiſt in America. The number of people without property is there, from the phyſical ſtate of the country, comparatively ſmall; and therefore the civil power which is to protect property, cannot require the ſame degree of ſtrength. Mr. Paine very juſtly obſerves, that whatever the apparent cauſe of any riots may be, the real one is always want of happineſs; but when he goes on to ſay, it ſhows that ſomething is wrong in the ſyſtem of government, that injures the felicity by which ſociety is to be preſerved, he falls into the common error of attributing all want of happineſs to government. It is evident that this want of happineſs might have exiſted, and from ignorance might have been the principal cauſe of the riots, and yet be almoſt wholly unconnected with any of the proceedings of government. The redundant population of an old ſtate fur-

niſhes materials of unhappineſs, unknown to ſuch a ſtate as that of America; and if an attempt were to be made to remedy this unhappineſs, by diſtributing the produce of the taxes to the poorer claſſes of ſociety, according to the plan propoſed by Mr. Paine, the evil would be aggravated a hundred fold, and in a very ſhort time no ſum that the ſociety could poſſibly raiſe would be adequate to the propoſed object.

Nothing would ſo effectually counteract the miſchiefs occaſioned by Mr. Paine's Rights of Man, as a general knowledge of the real rights of man. What theſe rights are it is not my buſineſs at preſent to explain; but there is one right which man has generally been thought to poſſeſs, which I am confident he neither does nor can poſſeſs, a right to ſubſiſtence when his labour will not fairly purchaſe it. Our laws indeed ſay, that he has this right, and bind the ſociety to furniſh employment and food to thoſe who cannot get them in the regular market; but in ſo doing they attempt to reverſe the laws of nature; and it is in conſequence to be expected, not only that they ſhould fail in their object, but that the poor who were intended to be benefited, ſhould ſuffer moſt cruelly from this

this inhuman deceit which is practiſed upon them.

The Abbé Raynal has ſaid, that "Avant "toutes les loix ſociales l'homme avoit le droit "de ſubſiſter[a]." He might with juſt as much propriety have ſaid, that before the inſtitution of ſocial laws, every man had a right to live a hundred years. Undoubtedly he had then, and has ſtill, a good right to live a hundred years, nay a thouſand, *if he can*, without interfering with the right of others to live; but the affair in both caſes is principally an affair of power, not of right. Social laws very greatly increaſe this power, by enabling a much greater number to ſubſiſt than could ſubſiſt without them, and ſo far very greatly enlarge *le droit de ſubſiſter*; but neither before nor after the inſtitution of ſocial laws could an unlimited number ſubſiſt; and before, as well as ſince, he who ceaſed to have the power ceaſed to have the right.

If the great truths on theſe ſubjects were more generally circulated, and the lower claſſes of people could be convinced, that by the laws of nature, independently of any particular inſtitutions, except the great one of property, which is abſolutely neceſſary in order to attain any conſiderable produce, no perſon has any

[a] Raynal, Hiſt. des Indes, vol. x. l. x. p. 322, 8vo.

claim

claim of *right* on ſociety for ſubſiſtence, if his labour will not purchaſe it, the greateſt part of the miſchievous declamation on the unjuſt inſtitutions of ſociety would fall powerleſs to the ground. The poor are by no means inclined to be viſionary. Their diſtreſſes are always real, though they are not attributed to the real cauſes. If theſe real cauſes were properly explained to them, and they were taught to know how ſmall a part of their preſent diſtreſs was attributable to government, and how great a part to cauſes totally unconnected with it, diſcontent and irritation among the lower claſſes of people would ſhow themſelves much leſs frequently than at preſent; and when they did ſhow themſelves, would be much leſs to be dreaded. The efforts of turbulent and diſcontented men in the middle claſſes of ſociety might ſafely be diſregarded, if the poor were ſo far enlightened reſpecting the real nature of their ſituation, as to be aware that by aiding them in their ſchemes of renovation, they would probably be promoting the ambitious views of others, without, in any reſpect, benefiting themſelves. And the country gentlemen, and men of property in England, might ſecurely return to a wholeſome jealouſy of the encroachments of power; and inſtead

inſtead of daily ſacrificing the liberties of the ſubject on the altar of public ſafety, might, without any juſt apprehenſion from the people, not only tread back all their late ſteps, but firmly inſiſt upon thoſe gradual reforms, which the lapſe of time and the ſtorms of the political world, have rendered neceſſary to prevent the gradual deſtruction of the Britiſh conſtitution.

All improvements in government muſt neceſſarily originate with perſons of ſome education, and theſe will of courſe be found among the people of property. Whatever may be ſaid of a few, it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe that the great maſs of the people of property ſhould be really intereſted in the abuſes of government. They merely ſubmit to them from the fear that an endeavour to remove them might be productive of greater evils. Could we but take away this fear, reform and improvement would proceed with as much facility as the removal of nuiſances, or the paving and lighting of the ſtreets. In human life we are continually called upon to ſubmit to a leſſer evil in order to avoid a greater; and it is the part of a wiſe man to do this readily and cheerfully; but no wiſe man will ſubmit to any evil if he can get rid of it without danger. Remove all apprehenſion from the tyranny or folly of

the people, and the tyranny of government could not ſtand a moment. It would then appear in its proper deformity, without palliation, without pretext, without protector. Naturally feeble in itſelf, when it was once ſtripped naked, and deprived of the ſupport of public opinion and of the great plea of neceſſity, it would fall without a ſtruggle. Its few intereſted defenders would hide their heads abaſhed, and would be aſhamed any longer to advocate a cauſe for which no human ingenuity could invent a plauſible argument.

The moſt ſucceſsful ſupporters of tyranny are without doubt thoſe general declaimers, who attribute the diſtreſſes of the poor, and almoſt all the evils to which ſociety is ſubject, to human inſtitutions and the iniquity of governments. The falſity of theſe accuſations, and the dreadful conſequences that would reſult from their being generally admitted and acted upon, make it abſolutely neceſſary that they ſhould at all events be reſiſted; not only on account of the immediate revolutionary horrors to be expected from a movement of the people acting under ſuch impreſſions, a conſideration which muſt at all times have very great weight, but on account of the extreme probability that ſuch

ſuch a revolution would terminate in a much worſe deſpotiſm than that which it had deſtroyed. On theſe grounds a genuine friend of freedom, a zealous advocate for the real rights of man, might be found among the defenders of a conſiderable degree of tyranny. A cauſe bad in itſelf might be ſupported by the good and the virtuous, merely becauſe that which was oppoſed to it was much worſe; and at the moment, it was abſolutely neceſſary to make a choice between the two. Whatever therefore may be the intention of thoſe indiſcriminate accuſations againſt governments, their real effect undoubtedly is, to add a weight of talents and principles to the prevailing power which it never would have received otherwiſe.

It is a truth which I truſt has been ſufficiently proved in the courſe of this work, that under a government conſtructed upon the beſt and pureſt principles, and executed by men of the higheſt talents and integrity, the moſt ſqualid poverty and wretchedneſs might univerſally prevail from an inattention to the prudential check to population. And as this cauſe of unhappineſs has hitherto been ſo little underſtood, that the efforts of ſociety have always tended rather to aggravate than to leſſen it, we have

the ſtrongeſt reaſons for ſuppoſing that in all the governments with which we are acquainted, a great part of the miſery to be obſerved among the lower claſſes of the people ariſes from this cauſe.

The inference therefore which Mr. Paine and others have drawn againſt governments from the unhappineſs of the people, is palpably unfair; and before we give a ſanction to ſuch accuſations, it is a debt we owe to truth and juſtice, to aſcertain how much of this unhappineſs ariſes from the principle of population, and how much is fairly to be attributed to government. When this diſtinction has been properly made, and all the vague, indefinite, and falſe accuſations removed, government would remain, as it ought to be, clearly reſponſible for the reſt; and the amount of this would ſtill be ſuch as to make the reſponſibility very conſiderable. Though government has but little power in the direct and immediate relief of poverty, yet its indirect influence on the proſperity of its ſubjects is ſtriking and inconteſtible. And the reaſon is, that though it is comparatively impotent in its efforts to make the food of a country keep pace with an unreſtricted increaſe of population, yet its influence is great in giving the beſt direction to thoſe checks which in ſome form or other

other muſt neceſſarily take place. It has clearly appeared in the former part of this work, that the moſt deſpotic and worſt-governed countries, however low they might be in actual population, were uniformly the moſt populous in proportion to their means of ſubſiſtence, and the neceſſary effect of this ſtate of things muſt of courſe be very low wages. In ſuch countries the checks to population ariſe more from the ſickneſs and mortality conſequent on poverty, than from the prudence and foreſight which reſtrains the frequency and univerſality of early marriages. The checks are more of the poſitive and leſs of the preventive kind.

The firſt grand requiſite to the growth of prudential habits is the perfect ſecurity of property, and the next perhaps is that reſpectability and importance which is given to the lower claſſes by equal laws, and the poſſeſſion of ſome influence in the framing of them. The more excellent therefore is the government, the more does it tend to generate that prudence and elevation of ſentiment, by which alone in the preſent ſtate of our being can poverty be avoided.

It has been ſometimes aſſerted, that the only reaſon why it is advantageous that the people ſhould have ſome ſhare in the government, is

that a repreſentation of the people tends beſt to ſecure the framing of good and equal laws, but that if the ſame object could be attained under a deſpotiſm, the ſame advantage would accrue to the community. If however the repreſentative ſyſtem, by ſecuring to the lower claſſes of ſociety a more equal and liberal mode of treatment from their ſuperiors, gives to each individual a greater perſonal reſpectability, and a greater fear of perſonal degradation, it is evident that it will powerfully cooperate with the ſecurity of property in animating the exertions of induſtry, and in generating habits of prudence, and thus more powerfully tend to increaſe the riches and proſperity of the lower claſſes of the community, than if the ſame laws had exiſted under a deſpotiſm.

But though the tendency of a free conſtitution and a good government to diminiſh poverty be certain; yet its effect in this way muſt neceſſarily be indirect and ſlow, and very different from the direct and immediate relief which the lower claſſes of people are too frequently in the habit of looking forward to as the conſequence of a revolution. This habit of expecting too much, and the irritation occaſioned by diſappointment, continually give a

wrong direction to their efforts in favour of liberty, and conſtantly tend to defeat the accompliſhment of thoſe gradual reforms in government, and that ſlow melioration of the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety, which are really attainable.

It is of the very higheſt importance therefore to know diſtinctly what government cannot do, as well as what it can do. If I were called upon to name the cauſe, which, in my conception, had more than any other contributed to the very ſlow progreſs of freedom, ſo diſheartening to every liberal mind, I ſhould ſay that it was the confuſion that had exiſted reſpecting the cauſes of the unhappineſs and diſcontents which prevail in ſociety; and the advantage which governments had been able to take, and indeed had been compelled to take, of this confuſion, to confirm and ſtrengthen their power. I cannot help thinking therefore, that a knowledge generally circulated, that the principal cauſe of want and unhappineſs is only indirectly connected with government, and totally beyond its power directly to remove; and that it depends upon the conduct of the poor themſelves, would inſtead of giving any advantage to go-

vernments, give a great additional weight to the popular ſide of the queſtion, by removing the dangers with which from ignorance it is at preſent accompanied; and thus tend, in a very powerful manner, to promote the cauſe of rational freedom.

CHAP. VII.

Plan of the gradual abolition of the Poor Laws propoſed.

If the principles in the preceding chapters ſhould ſtand the teſt of examination, and we ſhould ever feel the obligation of endeavouring to act upon them, the next inquiry would be, in what way we ought practically to proceed. The firſt grand obſtacle which preſents itſelf in this country, is the ſyſtem of the poor laws, which has been juſtly ſtated to be an evil, in compariſon of which the national debt, with all its magnitude of terror, is of little moment[a]. The rapidity with which the poors rates have increaſed of late years, preſents us indeed with the proſpect of ſuch an extraordinary proportion of paupers in the ſociety, as would ſeem to be incredible in a nation flouriſhing in arts, agriculture, and commerce, and with a government which has generally been allowed to be the

[a] Reports of the Society for bettering the condition of the poor, vol. iii. p. 21.

beſt

beſt that has hitherto ſtood the teſt of experience[a].

Greatly as we may be ſhocked at ſuch a proſpect, and ardently as we may wiſh to remove it, the evil is now ſo deeply ſeated, and the relief given by the poor laws ſo widely extended, that no man of humanity could venture to propoſe their immediate abolition. To mitigate their effects however, and ſtop their future increaſe, to which, if left to continue upon their preſent plan, we can ſee no probable termination, it has been propoſed to fix the whole ſum to be raiſed, at its preſent rate, or any other that might be determined upon; and to make a law that on no account this ſum ſhould be exceeded. The objection to this plan is, that a very large ſum would be ſtill to be raiſed, and a great number of people to be ſupported; the conſequence of which would be, that the poor would not be eaſily able to diſtinguiſh the alteration that had been made. Each individual

[a] It has been ſaid that during the late ſcarcities, half of the population of the country received relief. If the poors rates continue increaſing as rapidly as they have done on the average of the laſt ten years, how melancholy are our future proſpects? The ſyſtem of the poor laws has been juſtly ſtated by the French to be *la plaie politique de l'Angleterre la plus dévorante.* (Comitè de Mendicitè.)

would

would think that he had as good a right to be ſupported when he was in want as any other perſon; and thoſe who unfortunately chanced to be in diſtreſs when the fixed ſum had been collected, would think themſelves particularly ill uſed on being excluded from all aſſiſtance, while ſo many others were enjoying this advantage. If the ſum collected were divided among all that were in want, however their numbers might increaſe, though ſuch a plan would not be ſo unfair with regard to thoſe who became dependent after the ſum had been fixed, it would undoubtedly be very hard upon thoſe who had been in the habit of receiving a more liberal ſupply, and had done nothing to juſtify its being taken from them; and in both caſes, it would be certainly unjuſt in the ſociety to undertake the ſupport of the poor, and yet if their numbers increaſed, to feed them ſo ſparingly that they muſt neceſſarily die of hunger and diſeaſe.

I have reflected much on the ſubject of the poor laws, and hope therefore that I ſhall be excuſed in venturing to ſuggeſt a mode of their gradual abolition, to which I confeſs that at preſent I can ſee no material objection. Of this indeed I feel nearly convinced, that ſhould we ever become ſufficiently ſenſible of the wide-

ſpreading

ſpreading tyranny, dependence, indolence, and unhappineſs, which they create, as ſeriouſly to make an effort to aboliſh them, we ſhall be compelled by a ſenſe of juſtice to adopt the principle, if not the plan, which I ſhall mention. It ſeems impoſſible to get rid of ſo extenſive a ſyſtem of ſupport, conſiſtently with humanity, without applying ourſelves directly to its vital principle, and endeavouring to counteract that deeply-ſeated cauſe, which occaſions the rapid growth of all ſuch eſtabliſhments, and invariably renders them inadequate to their object. As a previous ſtep even to any conſiderable alteration in the preſent ſyſtem, which would contract, or ſtop the increaſe of the relief to be given, it appears to me that we are bound in juſtice and honour formally to diſclaim the *right* of the poor to ſupport.

To this end, I ſhould propoſe a regulation to be made, declaring, that no child born from any marriage, taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of the law; and no illegitimate child born two years from the ſame date, ſhould ever be entitled to pariſh aſſiſtance. And to give a more general knowledge of this law, and to enforce it more ſtrongly on the minds of the lower claſſes of people, the clergyman of each

each pariſh ſhould after the publication of banns, read a ſhort addreſs, ſtating the ſtrong obligation on every man to ſupport his own children; the impropriety, and even immorality, of marrying without a fair proſpect of being able to do this; the evils which had reſulted to the poor themſelves, from the attempt which had been made to aſſiſt by public inſtitutions in a duty which ought to be excluſively appropriated to parents; and the abſolute neceſſity which had at length appeared, of abandoning all ſuch inſtitutions, on account of their producing effects totally oppoſite to thoſe which were intended.

This would operate as a fair, diſtinct, and preciſe notice, which no man could well miſtake; and without preſſing hard on any particular individuals, would at once throw off the riſing generation from that miſerable and helpleſs dependence upon the government and the rich, the moral as well as phyſical conſequences of which are almoſt incalculable.

After the public notice which I have propoſed had been given, and the ſyſtem of poor laws had ceaſed with regard to the riſing generation, if any man choſe to marry, without a proſpect of being able to ſupport a family, he ſhould have the moſt perfect liberty ſo to do. Though to marry,

marry, in this caſe, is in my opinion clearly an immoral act, yet it is not one which ſociety can juſtly take upon itſelf to prevent or puniſh; becauſe the puniſhment provided for it by the laws of nature, falls directly and moſt ſeverely upon the individual who commits the act, and through him, only more remotely and feebly on the ſociety. When nature will govern and puniſh for us, it is a very miſerable ambition to wiſh to ſnatch the rod from her hands, and draw upon ourſelves the odium of executioner. To the puniſhment therefore of nature he ſhould be left, the puniſhment of want. He has erred in the face of a moſt clear and preciſe warning, and can have no juſt reaſon to complain of any perſon but himſelf, when he feels the conſequences of his errour. All pariſh aſſiſtance ſhould be denied him: and if the hand of private charity be ſtretched forth in his relief, the intereſts of humanity imperiouſly require that it ſhould be adminiſtered ſparingly. He ſhould be taught to know that the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, had doomed him and his family to ſuffer for diſobeying their repeated admonitions; that he had no claim of *right* on ſociety for the ſmalleſt portion of food, beyond that which his labour would fairly purchaſe;

chaſe; and that if he and his family were ſaved from ſuffering the extremities of hunger, he would owe it to the pity of ſome kind benefactor, to whom, therefore, he ought to be bound by the ſtrongeſt ties of gratitude.

If this ſyſtem were purſued, we need be under no apprehenſions that the number of perſons in extreme want would be beyond the power and the will of the benevolent to ſupply. The ſphere for the exerciſe of private charity would, I am confident, be leſs than it is at preſent; and the only difficulty would be, to reſtrain the hand of benevolence from aſſiſting thoſe in diſtreſs in ſo indiſcriminate a manner as to encourage indolence and want of foreſight in others.

With regard to illegitimate children, after the proper notice had been given, they ſhould not be allowed to have any claim to pariſh aſſiſtance, but be left entirely to the ſupport of private charity. If the parents deſert their child they ought to be made anſwerable for the crime. The infant is, comparatively ſpeaking, of little value to the ſociety, as others will immediately ſupply its place. Its principal value is on account of its being the object of one of the moſt delightful paſſions in human nature—

parental

parental affection. But if this value be diſregarded by thoſe who are alone in a capacity to feel it, the ſociety cannot be called upon to put itſelf in their place; and has no further buſineſs in its protection, than to puniſh the crime of deſertion or intentional ill-treatment in the perſons whoſe duty it is to provide for it.

At preſent the child is taken under the protection of the pariſh[a], and generally dies, at leaſt in London, within the firſt year. The loſs to the ſociety is the ſame; but the crime is diluted by the number of people concerned, and the death paſſes as a viſitation of Providence, inſtead of being conſidered as the neceſſary conſequence of the conduct of its parents, for which they ought to be held reſponſible to God and to ſociety.

The deſertion of both parents, however, is not ſo common as the deſertion of one. When a ſervant or labouring man has an illegitimate child, his running away is perfectly a matter of courſe; and it is by no means uncommon for a

[a] I fully agree with Sir F. M. Eden, in thinking that the conſtant public ſupport which deſerted children receive, is the cauſe of their very great numbers in the two moſt opulent countries of Europe, France and England. State of the Poor, vol. i. p. 339.

man

man with a wife and large family to withdraw into a diſtant county, and leave them to the pariſh; indeed I once heard a hard-working good ſort of man propoſe to do this, as the beſt mode of providing for a wife and ſix children[a]. If the ſimple fact of theſe frequent deſertions were related in ſome countries, a ſtrange inference would be drawn againſt the Engliſh character; but the wonder would ceaſe when our public inſtitutions were explained.

By the laws of nature, a child is confided directly and excluſively to the protection of its parents. By the laws of nature, the mother of a child is confided almoſt as ſtrongly and excluſively to the man who is the father of it. If theſe ties were ſuffered to remain in the ſtate in which nature has left them, and the man were convinced that the woman and the child depended ſolely upon him for ſupport, I ſcarcely believe that there are ten men breathing ſo atrocious as to deſert them. But our laws, in oppoſition to the laws of nature, ſay,

[a] "That many of the poorer claſſes of the community "avail themſelves of the liberality of the law, and leave their "wives and children on the pariſh, the reader will find "abundant proof in the ſubſequent part of this work." Sir F. M. Eden on the State of the Poor, vol. i. p. 339.

that if the parents forſake their child, other perſons will undertake to ſupport it; or if the man forſake the woman ſhe ſhall ſtill meet with protection elſewhere; that is, we take all poſſible pains to weaken and render null the ties of nature, and then ſay that men are unnatural. But the fact is, that the ſociety itſelf, in its body politic, is the unnatural character, for framing laws that thus counteract the laws of nature, and give premiums to the violation of the beſt and moſt honourable feelings of the human heart.

It is a common thing in moſt pariſhes, when the father of an illegitimate child can be ſeized, to endeavour to frighten him into marriage by the terrors of a jail; but ſuch a proceeding cannot ſurely be too ſtrongly reprobated. In the firſt place, it is a moſt ſhallow policy in the pariſh officers; for if they ſucceed, the effect upon the preſent ſyſtem will generally be, the having three or four children to provide for inſtead of one. And in the next place, it is difficult to conceive a more groſs and ſcandalous profanation of a religious ceremony. Thoſe who believe that the character of a woman is ſalved by ſuch a forced engagement, or that the moral worth of the man is enhanced by affirm-

ing a lie before God, have, I confeſs, very different ideas of delicacy and morality, from thoſe which I have been taught to conſider as juſt. If a man deceive a woman into a connexion with him under a promiſe of marriage, he has undoubtedly been guilty of a moſt atrocious act, and there are few crimes which merit a more ſevere puniſhment; but the laſt that I ſhould chooſe is that which will oblige him to affirm another falſehood, which will probably render the woman that he is to be joined to miſerable, and will burden the ſociety with a family of paupers.

The obligation on every man to ſupport his children, whether legitimate or illegitimate, is ſo clear and ſtrong, that it would be juſt to arm ſociety with any power to enforce it, which would be likely to anſwer the purpoſe. But I am inclined to believe that no exerciſe of the civil power, however rigorous, would be half ſo effectual, as a knowledge generally circulated that children were in future to depend ſolely for ſupport upon their parents, and would be left only to caſual charity if they were deſerted.

It may appear to be hard, that a mother and her children, who had been guilty of no particular crime themſelves, ſhould ſuffer for the ill

conduct of the father; but this is one of the invariable laws of nature; and knowing this, we ſhould think twice upon the ſubject, and be very ſure of the ground on which we go, before we preſume *ſyſtematically* to counteract it.

I have often heard the goodneſs of the Deity impeached on account of that part of the decalogue, in which he declares, that he will viſit the ſins of the father upon the children; but the objection has not perhaps been ſufficiently conſidered. Without a moſt complete and fundamental change in the whole conſtitution of human nature; without making man an angel, or at leaſt ſomething totally different from what he is at preſent; it ſeems abſolutely neceſſary that ſuch a law ſhould prevail. Would it not require a perpetual miracle, which is, perhaps, a contradiction in terms, to prevent children from being affected in their moral and civil condition by the conduct of their parents? What man is there that has been brought up by his parents, who is not at the preſent moment enjoying ſomething from their virtues, or ſuffering ſomething from their vices; who, in his moral character, has not been elevated in ſome degree, by their prudence, their juſtice, their benevolence, their temperance, or depreſſed by

by the contraries; who, in his civil condition, has not been raiſed, by their reputation, their foreſight, their induſtry, their good fortune, or lowered by their want of character, their imprudence, their indolence, and their adverſity? And how much does a knowledge of this tranſmiſſion of bleſſings contribute to excite and invigorate virtuous exertion? Proceeding upon this certainty, how ardent and inceſſant are the efforts of parents to give their children a good education, and to provide for their future ſituation in the world. If a man could neglect or deſert his wife and children without their ſuffering any injury, how many individuals there are, who not being very fond of their wives, or being tired of the ſhackles of matrimony, would withdraw from houſehold cares and difficulties, and reſume their liberty and independence as ſingle men. But the conſideration that children may ſuffer for the faults of their parents has a ſtrong hold even upon vice, and many who are in ſuch a ſtate of mind as to diſregard the conſequences of their habitual courſe of life, as far as relates to themſelves, are yet greatly anxious that their children ſhould not ſuffer from their vices and follies. In the moral government of the world, it ſeems evidently neceſſary that the ſins of the fathers ſhould be

viſited upon the children; and if in our overweening vanity we imagine that we can govern a private ſociety better by endeavouring *ſyſtematically* to counteract this law, I am inclined to believe that we ſhall find ourſelves very greatly miſtaken.

If the plan which I have propoſed, were adopted, the poors rates in a few years would begin very rapidly to decreaſe, and in no great length of time would be completely extinguiſhed; and yet, as far as it appears to me at preſent, no individual would be either deceived or injured, and conſequently no perſon could have a juſt right to complain.

The abolition of the poor laws however, is not of itſelf ſufficient; and the obvious anſwer to thoſe who lay too much ſtreſs upon this ſyſtem is, to deſire them to look at the ſtate of the poor in ſome other countries, where ſuch laws do not prevail, and to compare it with their condition in England. But this compariſon, it muſt be acknowledged, is in many reſpects unfair; and would by no means decide the queſtion of the utility or inutility of ſuch a ſyſtem. England poſſeſſes very great natural and political advantages, in which perhaps the countries that we ſhould, in this caſe, compare with

with her, would be found to be palpably deficient. The nature of her ſoil and climate is ſuch, that thoſe almoſt univerſal failures in the crops of grain, which are known in ſome countries, never occur in England. Her inſular ſituation and extended commerce are peculiarly favourable for importation. Her numerous manufactures employ nearly all the hands that are not engaged in agriculture, and afford the means of a regular diſtribution of the annual produce of the land and labour to the whole of her inhabitants. But above all, throughout a very large claſs of the people, a decided taſte for the conveniencies and comforts of life, a ſtrong deſire of bettering their condition, that maſter-ſpring of public proſperity, and in conſequence, a moſt laudable ſpirit of induſtry and foreſight are obſerved to prevail. Theſe diſpoſitions, ſo contrary to the hopeleſs indolence remarked in deſpotic countries, are generated by the conſtitution of the Engliſh government, and the excellence of its laws, which ſecure to every individual the produce of his induſtry. When therefore, on a compariſon with other countries, England appears to have the advantage in the ſtate of her poor, the ſuperiority is entirely to be attributed to theſe favourable circumſtances,

and not to the poor laws. A woman with one bad feature may greatly excel in beauty ſome other, who may have this individual feature tolerably good; but it would be rather ſtrange to aſſert, in conſequence, that the ſuperior beauty of the former was occaſioned by this particular deformity. The poor laws have conſtantly tended to counteract the natural and acquired advantages of this country. Fortunately theſe advantages have been ſo conſiderable that though weakened they could not be overcome; and to theſe advantages, together with the checks to marriage, which the laws themſelves create, it is owing that England has been able to bear up ſo long againſt this pernicious ſyſtem. Probably there is not any other country in the world, except perhaps Holland before the revolution, which could have acted upon it ſo completely, for the ſame period of time without utter ruin.

It has been propoſed by ſome to eſtabliſh poor laws in Ireland; but from the wretched and degraded ſtate of the common people, and the total want of that decent pride which in England prevents ſo many from having recourſe to pariſh aſſiſtance, there is little reaſon to doubt that on the eſtabliſhment of ſuch laws, the whole

whole of the landed property would very ſoon be abſorbed, or the ſyſtem be given up in deſpair.

In Sweden, from the dearths which are not unfrequent, owing to the general failure of crops in an unpropitious climate, and the impoſſibility of great importations in a poor country, an attempt to eſtabliſh a ſyſtem of parochial relief ſuch as that in England, if it were not ſpeedily abandoned from the phyſical impoſſibility of executing it, would level the property of the kingdom from one end to the other, and convulſe the ſocial ſyſtem in ſuch a manner as abſolutely to prevent it from recovering its former ſtate on the return of plenty.

Even in France, with all her advantages of ſituation and climate, the tendency to population is ſo great, and the want of foreſight among the lower claſſes of the people ſo conſpicuous, that if poor laws were eſtabliſhed the landed property would ſoon ſink under the burden, and the wretchedneſs of the people at the ſame time be increaſed. On theſe conſiderations the committee *de Mendicitè*, at the beginning of the revolution, very properly and judiciouſly rejected the eſtabliſhment of ſuch a ſyſtem which had been propoſed.

The

The exception of Holland, if it were an exception, would ariſe from very particular circumſtances—her extenſive foreign trade, and her numerous colonial emigrations, compared with the ſmallneſs of her territory; and the extreme unhealthineſs of a great part of the country, which occaſions a much greater average mortality than is common in other ſtates. Theſe, I conceive, were the unobſerved cauſes which principally contributed to render Holland ſo famous for the management of her poor, and able to employ and ſupport all who applied for relief.

No part of Germany is ſufficiently rich to ſupport an extenſive ſyſtem of parochial relief; but I am inclined to think, that from the abſence of it, the lower claſſes of the people in ſome parts of Germany, are in a better ſituation than thoſe of the ſame claſs in England. In Switzerland, for the ſame reaſon, their condition, before the late troubles, was perhaps univerſally ſuperior. And in a journey through the dutchies of Holſtein and Sleſwick belonging to Denmark, the houſes of the lower claſſes of people appeared to me to be neater and better, and in general there were fewer indications of poverty and wretchedneſs among them, than among the ſame ranks in this country.

Even

Even in Norway, notwithſtanding the diſadvantage of a ſevere and uncertain climate, from the little that I ſaw in a few weeks reſidence in the country, and the information that I could collect from others, I am inclined to think that the poor were, on the average, better off than in England. Their houſes and clothing were ſuperior, and though they had no white bread, they had much more meat, fiſh, and milk, than our labourers; and I particularly remarked, that the farmers' boys were much ſtouter and healthier looking lads than thoſe of the ſame deſcription in England. This degree of happineſs, ſuperior to what could be expected from the ſoil and climate, ariſes almoſt excluſively from the degree in which the preventive check to population operates; and the eſtabliſhment of a ſyſtem of poor laws, which would deſtroy this check, would at once ſink the lower claſſes of the people into a ſtate of the moſt miſerable poverty and wretchedneſs; would diminiſh their induſtry, and conſequently the produce of the land and labour of the country; would weaken the reſources of ingenuity in times of ſcarcity; and ultimately involve the country in all the horrors of continual famines.

If

If, as in Ireland and in Spain, and many of the ſouthern countries, the people be in ſo degraded a ſtate as to propagate their ſpecies like brutes, totally regardleſs of conſequences, it matters little whether they have poor laws or not. Miſery in all its various forms muſt be the predominant check to their increaſe. Poor laws, indeed, will always tend to aggravate the evil, by diminiſhing the general reſources of the country, and in ſuch a ſtate of things could exiſt only for a very ſhort time; but with or without them, no ſtretch of human ingenuity and exertion could reſcue the people from the moſt extreme poverty and wretchedneſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the modes of correcting the prevailing opinions on Population.

It is not enough to aboliſh all the poſitive inſtitutions which encourage population; but we muſt endeavour at the ſame time, to correct the prevailing opinions, which have the ſame, or perhaps even a more powerful effect. This muſt neceſſarily be a work of time; and can only be done by circulating juſter notions on theſe ſubjects, in writings and converſation; and by endeavouring to impreſs as ſtrongly as poſſible on the public mind, that it is not the duty of man ſimply to propagate his ſpecies, but to propagate virtue and happineſs; and that, if he has not a tolerably fair proſpect of doing this, he is by no means called upon to leave deſcendants.

Among the higher ranks of ſociety, we have not much reaſon to apprehend the too great frequency of marriage. Though the circulation of juſter notions on this ſubject might, even in this part of the community, do much good, and

and prevent many unhappy marriages; yet whether we make particular exertions for this purpoſe, or not, we may reſt aſſured that the degree of proper pride and ſpirit of independence almoſt invariably connected with education and a certain rank in life, will ſecure the operation of the prudential check to marriage to a conſiderable extent. All that the ſociety can reaſonably require of its members is, that they ſhould not have families without being able to ſupport them. This may be fairly enjoined as a poſitive duty. Every reſtraint beyond this muſt be conſidered as a matter of choice and taſte; but from what we already know of the habits which prevail among the higher ranks of life, we have reaſon to think that little more is wanted to attain the object required, than to award a greater degree of reſpect and of perſonal liberty to ſingle women, and to place them nearer upon a level with married women; a change, which independently of any particular purpoſe in view, the plaineſt principles of equity ſeem to demand.

If among the higher claſſes of ſociety, the object of ſecuring the operation of the prudential check to marriage to a ſufficient degree appear to be attainable without much difficulty, the

the obvious mode of proceeding with the lower claſſes of ſociety, where the point is of the principal importance, is to endeavour to infuſe into them a portion of that knowledge and foreſight, which ſo much facilitates the attainment of this object in the educated part of the community.

The faireſt chance of accompliſhing this end would probably be by the eſtabliſhment of a ſyſtem of parochial education upon a plan ſimilar to that propoſed by Dr. Smith[a]. In addition to the uſual ſubjects of inſtruction, and thoſe which he has mentioned, I ſhould be diſpoſed to lay conſiderable ſtreſs on the frequent explanation of the real ſtate of the lower claſſes of ſociety, as affected by the principle of population, and their conſequent dependence on themſelves for the chief part of their happineſs or miſery. It would be by no means neceſſary or proper in theſe explanations, to under-rate in the ſmalleſt degree, the deſirableneſs of marriage. It ſhould always be repreſented as, what it really is, a ſtate peculiarly ſuited to the nature of man, and calculated greatly to advance his happineſs, and remove the temptations to vice; but like property or any other deſirable

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. iii. b. v. c. i. p. 187.

object,

object, its advantages ſhould be ſhown to be unattainable, except under certain conditions. And a ſtrong conviction in a young man of the deſirableneſs of marriage, with a conviction at the ſame time, that the power of ſupporting a family was the only condition which would enable him really to enjoy its bleſſings, would be the moſt effectual motive imaginable to induſtry and ſobriety before marriage, and would powerfully urge him to ſave that ſuperfluity of income which ſingle labourers neceſſarily poſſeſs, for the accompliſhment of a rational and deſirable object, inſtead of diſſipating it, as is now uſually done, in idleneſs and vice.

If, in the courſe of time, a few of the ſimpleſt principles of political economy could be added to the inſtructions given in theſe ſchools, the benefit to ſociety would be almoſt incalculable[a]. In ſome converſations with labouring men,

[a] Dr. Smith propoſes that the elementary parts of geometry and mechanics ſhould be taught in theſe pariſh ſchools; and I cannot help thinking that the common principles by which markets are regulated might be made ſufficiently clear to be of conſiderable uſe. It is certainly a ſubject that, as it intereſts the lower claſſes of people nearly, would be likely to attract their attention. At the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed, that it is impoſſible to be in any degree ſanguine on this point, recollecting

men, during the late ſcarcities, I confeſs that I was to the laſt degree diſheartened, at obſerving their inveterate prejudices on the ſubject of grain; and I felt very ſtrongly the almoſt abſolute incompatibility of a government really free, with ſuch a degree of ignorance. The deluſions are of ſuch a nature, that if acted upon, they muſt at all events be repreſſed by force;

collecting how very ignorant in general the educated part of the community is of theſe principles. If, however, political economy cannot be taught to the common people, I really think that it ought to form a branch of a univerſity education. Scotland has ſet us an example in this reſpect, which we ought not to be ſo ſlow to imitate. It is of the very utmoſt importance that the gentlemen of the country, and particularly the clergy, ſhould not, from ignorance, aggravate the evils of ſcarcity every time that it unfortunately occurs. During the late dearths, half of the gentlemen and clergymen in the kingdom richly deſerved to have been proſecuted for ſedition. After inflaming the minds of the common people againſt the farmers and corn-dealers, by the manner in which they talked of them, or preached about them, it was but a feeble antidote to the poiſon which they had infuſed, coldly to obſerve, that however the poor might be oppreſſed or cheated, it was their duty to keep the peace. It was little better than Anthony's repeated declaration, that the conſpiritors were all honourable men; which did not ſave either their houſes or their perſons from the attacks of the mob. Political economy is perhaps the only ſcience of which it may be ſaid, that the ignorance of it is not merely a deprivation of good, but produces great poſitive evil.

and it is extremely difficult to give ſuch a power to the government as will be ſufficient at all times for this purpoſe, without the riſk of its being employed improperly, and endangering the liberty of the ſubject.

We have laviſhed immenſe ſums on the poor, which we have every reaſon to think have conſtantly tended to aggravate their miſery. But in their education, and in the circulation of thoſe important political truths that moſt nearly concern them, which are perhaps the only means in our power of really raiſing their condition, and of making them happier men and more peaceable ſubjects, we have been miſerably deficient. It is ſurely a great national diſgrace, that the education of the lower claſſes of people in England ſhould be left merely to a few ſunday ſchools, ſupported by a ſubſcription from individuals, who of courſe can give to the courſe of inſtruction in them any kind of bias which they pleaſe. And even the improvement of ſunday ſchools, (for objectionable as they are in ſome points of view, and imperfect in all, I cannot but conſider them as an improvement) is of very late date.

The arguments which have been urged againſt inſtructing the people appear to me to be

be not only illiberal, but to the laſt degree feeble; and they ought, on the contrary, to be extremely forcible, and to be ſupported by the moſt obvious and ſtriking neceſſity, to warrant us in withholding the means of raiſing the condition of the lower claſſes of people, when they are in our power. Thoſe who will not liſten to any anſwer to theſe arguments drawn from theory, cannot, I think, refuſe the teſtimony of experience; and I would aſk, whether the advantage of ſuperior inſtruction which the lower claſſes of people in Scotland are known to poſſeſs, has appeared to have any tendency towards creating a ſpirit of tumult and diſcontent amongſt them. And yet from the natural inferiority of its ſoil and climate, the preſſure of want is more conſtant, and the dearths are not only more frequent, but more dreadful than in England. In the caſe of Scotland, the knowledge circulated among the common people, though not ſufficient eſſentially to better their condition by increaſing, in an adequate degree, their habits of prudence and foreſight, has yet the effect of making them bear with patience the evils which they ſuffer, from being aware of the folly and inefficacy of turbulence. The quiet and peaceable habits of the inſtructed

Scotch peaſant, compared with the turbulent diſpoſition of the ignorant Iriſhman, ought not to be without effect upon every impartial reaſoner.

The principal argument that I have heard advanced againſt a ſyſtem of national education in England is, that the common people would be put in a capacity to read ſuch works as thoſe of Paine, and that the conſequences would probably be fatal to government. But on this ſubject I agree moſt cordially with Dr. Smith[a] in thinking, that an inſtructed and well-informed people would be much leſs likely to be led away by inflammatory writings, and would be much better able to detect the falſe declamation of intereſted and ambitious demagogues, than an ignorant people. One or two readers in a pariſh are ſufficient to circulate any quantity of ſedition; and if theſe be gained to the democratic ſide, they will probably have the power of doing much more miſchief, by ſelecting the paſſages beſt ſuited to their hearers, and chooſing the moments when their oratory is likely to have the moſt effect, than if each individual in the pariſh had been in a capacity to read and judge of the whole work himſelf;

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. iii. b. v. c. i. p. 192.

and

and at the ſame time to read and judge of the oppoſing arguments, which we may ſuppoſe would alſo reach him.

But in addition to this, a double weight would undoubtedly be added to the obſervation of Dr. Smith, if theſe ſchools were made the means of inſtructing the people in the real nature of their ſituation; if they were taught, what is really true, that without an increaſe of their own induſtry and prudence, no change of government could eſſentially better their condition; that though they might get rid of ſome particular grievance, yet that in the great point of ſupporting their families, they would be but little, or perhaps not at all benefited; that a revolution would not alter in their favour the proportion of the ſupply of labour to the demand, or the quantity of food to the number of the conſumers; and that, if the ſupply of labour were greater than the demand, and the demand for food greater than the ſupply, they might ſuffer the utmoſt ſeverity of want, under the freeſt, the moſt perfect, and beſt executed government that the human imagination could conceive.

A knowledge of theſe truths ſo obviouſly tends to promote peace and quietneſs, to weaken

the effect of inflammatory writings, and to prevent all unreaſonable and ill-directed oppoſition to the conſtituted authorities, that thoſe who would ſtill object to the inſtruction of the people may fairly be ſuſpected of a wiſh to encourage their ignorance, as a pretext for tyranny, and an opportunity of increaſing the power and the influence of the executive government.

Beſides explaining the real ſituation of the lower claſſes of ſociety, as depending principally upon themſelves for their happineſs or miſery; the parochial ſchools would, by early inſtruction and the judicious diſtribution of rewards, have the faireſt chance of training up the riſing generation in habits of ſobriety, induſtry, independence, and prudence, and in a proper diſcharge of their religious duties; which would raiſe them from their preſent degraded ſtate, and approximate them, in ſome degree, to the middle claſſes of ſociety, whoſe habits, generally ſpeaking, are certainly ſuperior.

In moſt countries among the lower claſſes of people, there appears to be ſomething like a ſtandard of wretchedneſs, a point below which, they will not continue to marry and propagate their ſpecies. This ſtandard is different in different countries, and is formed by various concurring circumſtances

cumſtances of ſoil, climate, government, degree of knowledge, and civilization, &c. The principal circumſtances which contribute to raiſe it are liberty, ſecurity of property, the ſpread of knowledge, and a taſte for the conveniencies and the comforts of life. Thoſe which contribute principally to lower it are deſpotiſm and ignorance.

In an attempt to better the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety, our object ſhould be to raiſe this ſtandard as high as poſſible, by cultivating a ſpirit of independence, a decent pride, and a taſte for cleanlineſs and comfort. The effect of a good government in increaſing the prudential habits and perſonal reſpectability of the lower claſſes of ſociety has already been inſiſted on; but certainly this effect will always be incomplete without a good ſyſtem of education, and indeed it may be ſaid that no government can approach to perfection that does not provide for the inſtruction of the people. The benefits derived from education are among thoſe which may be enjoyed without reſtriction of numbers, and as it is in the power of governments to confer theſe benefits, it is undoubtedly their duty to do it.

CHAP. IX.

Of the direction of our charity.

An important and intereſting inquiry yet remains, relating to the mode of directing our private charity, ſo as not to interfere with the great object in view, of meliorating the condition of the lower claſſes of people, by preventing the population from preſſing too hard againſt the limits of the means of ſubſiſtence.

The emotion which prompts us to relieve our fellow-creatures in diſtreſs is, like all our other natural paſſions, general, and in ſome degree indiſcriminate and blind. Our feelings of compaſſion may be worked up to a higher pitch by a well-wrought ſcene in a play, or a fictitious tale in a novel, than by almoſt any events in real life: and if, among ten petitioners we were to liſten only to the firſt impulſes of our feelings, without making further inquiries, we ſhould undoubtedly give our aſſiſtance to the beſt actor of the party. It is evident therefore, that

the impulſe of benevolence, like the impulſes of love, of anger, of ambition, the deſire of eating and drinking, or any other of our natural propenſities, muſt be regulated by experience, and frequently brought to the teſt of utility, or it will defeat its intended purpoſe.

The apparent object of the paſſion between the ſexes is, the continuation of the ſpecies, and the formation of ſuch an intimate union of views and intereſts between two perſons, as will beſt promote their happineſs, and at the ſame time ſecure the proper degree of attention to the helpleſſneſs of infancy and the education of the riſing generation; but if every man were to obey at all times the impulſes of nature in the gratification of this paſſion, without regard to conſequences, the principal part of theſe important objects would not be attained, and even the continuation of the ſpecies might be defeated by a promiſcuous intercourſe.

The apparent end of the impulſe of benevolence, is to draw the whole human race together, but more particularly that part of it which is of our own nation and kindred, in the bonds of brotherly love; and by giving men an intereſt in the happineſs and miſery of their fellow-creatures, to prompt them, as they have power,

to

to mitigate the partial evils ariſing from general laws, and thus to increaſe the ſum of human happineſs; but if our benevolence be indiſcriminate, and the degree of apparent diſtreſs be made the ſole meaſure of our liberality, it is evident that it will be exerciſed almoſt excluſively upon common beggars, while modeſt unobtruſive merit, ſtruggling with unavoidable difficulties, yet ſtill maintaining ſome ſlight appearances of decency and cleanlineſs, will be totally neglected. We ſhall raiſe the worthleſs above the worthy; we ſhall encourage indolence and check induſtry; and in the moſt marked manner, ſubtract from the ſum of human happineſs.

Our experience has indeed informed us that the impulſe of benevolence is not ſo ſtrong as the paſſion between the ſexes, and that generally ſpeaking, there is much leſs danger to be apprehended from the indulgence of the former than of the latter; but independently of this experience, and of the moral codes founded upon it, a youth of eighteen would be as completely juſtified in indulging the ſexual paſſion with every object capable of exciting it, as in following indiſcriminately every impulſe of his benevolence. They are both natural paſſions which are excited

cited by their appropriate objects, and to the gratification of which, we are prompted by the pleaſurable ſenſations which accompany them. As animals, or till we know their conſequences, our only buſineſs is to follow theſe dictates of nature; but as reaſonable beings, we are under the ſtrongeſt obligations to attend to their conſequences; and if they be evil to ourſelves or others, we may juſtly conſider it as an indication that ſuch a mode of indulging theſe paſſions is not ſuited to our ſtate, or conformable to the will of God. As moral agents therefore, it is clearly our duty to reſtrain their indulgence in theſe particular directions; and by thus carefully examining the conſequences of our natural paſſions, and frequently bringing them to the teſt of utility, gradually to acquire a habit of gratifying them, only in that way, which being unattended with evil, will clearly add to the ſum of human happineſs, and fulfil the apparent purpoſe of the Creator.

Though utility therefore can never be the immediate excitement to the gratification of any paſſion, it is the teſt by which alone we can know, whether it ought or ought not to be indulged; and is therefore the ſureſt foundation of all morality which can be collected from the

the light of nature. All the moral codes which have inculcated the ſubjection of the paſſions to reaſon, have been, as I conceive, really built upon this foundation, whether the promulgators of them were aware of it or not.

I remind the reader of theſe truths, in order to apply them to the habitual direction of our charity; and if we keep the criterion of utility conſtantly in view, we may find ample room for the exerciſe of our benevolence, without interfering with the great purpoſe which we have to accompliſh.

One of the moſt valuable parts of charity, is its effect upon the giver. It is more bleſſed to give than to receive. Suppoſing it to be allowed, that the exerciſe of our benevolence in acts of charity is not, upon the whole, really beneficial to the poor, yet we could never ſanction any endeavour to extinguiſh an impulſe, the proper gratification of which has ſo evident a tendency to purify and exalt the human mind. But it is particularly ſatisfactory and pleaſing to find that the mode of exerciſing our charity, which when brought to the teſt of utility, will appear to be moſt beneficial to the poor, is preciſely that, which will have the beſt and moſt improving effect on the mind of the donor.

The

The quality of charity like that of mercy,

> " is not ſtrained;
> " It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> " Upon the earth beneath."

The immenſe ſums diſtributed to the poor in this country, by the parochial laws, are improperly called charity. They want its moſt diſtinguiſhing attribute; and as it might be expected from an attempt to force that which loſes its eſſence the moment that it ceaſes to be voluntary, their effects upon thoſe from whom they are collected are as prejudicial as on thoſe to whom they are diſtributed. On the ſide of the receivers of this miſcalled charity, inſtead of real relief, we find accumulated diſtreſs and more extended poverty; on the ſide of the givers, inſtead of pleaſurable ſenſations, unceaſing diſcontent and irritation.

In the great charitable inſtitutions ſupported by voluntary contributions, ſome of which are certainly of a prejudicial tendency, the ſubſcriptions, I am inclined to fear, are ſometimes given grudgingly, and rather becauſe they are expected by the world from certain ſtations and certain fortunes, than becauſe they are prompted by motives of genuine benevolence; and as the greater part of the ſubſcribers do not intereſt themſelves in the management of the funds, or

in

in the fate of the particular objects relieved, it is not to be expected that this kind of charity ſhould have any ſtrikingly beneficial influence on the minds of the majority who exerciſe it.

Even in the relief of common beggars, we ſhall find that we are often as much influenced by the deſire of getting rid of the importunities of a diſguſting object, as by the pleaſure of relieving it. We wiſh that it had not fallen in our way, rather than rejoice in the opportunity given us of aſſiſting a fellow-creature. We feel a painful emotion at the ſight of ſo much apparent miſery; but the pittance we give does not relieve it. We know that it is totally inadequate to produce any eſſential effect. We know beſides, that we ſhall be addreſſed in the ſame manner at the corner of the next ſtreet; and we know that we are liable to the groſſeſt impoſitions. We hurry therefore ſometimes by them, and ſhut our ears to their importunate demands. We give no more than we can help giving without doing actual violence to our feelings. Our charity is in ſome degree forced, and like forced charity, it leaves no ſatisfactory impreſſion on the mind, and cannot therefore have any very beneficial and improving effect on the heart and affections.

But it is far otherwiſe with that voluntary and

and active charity, which makes itself acquainted with the objects which it relieves; which seems to feel, and to be proud of the bond that unites the rich with the poor; which enters into their houses, informs itself not only of their wants, but of their habits and dispositions; checks the hopes of clamorous and obtrusive poverty, with no other recommendation but rags; and encourages with adequate relief the silent and retiring sufferer, labouring under unmerited difficulties. This mode of exercising our charity presents a very different picture from that of any other; and its contrast with the common mode of parish relief cannot be better described than in the words of Mr. Townsend, in the conclusion of his admirable dissertation on the Poor Laws. "Nothing in nature can be more disgusting "than a parish pay-table, attendant upon which "in the same objects of misery, are too often "found combined, snuff, gin, rags, vermin, in- "solence, and abusive language; nor in nature "can any thing be more beautiful than the "mild complacency of benevolence hastening "to the humble cottage to relieve the wants "of industry and virtue, to feed the hungry, "to clothe the naked, and to soothe the sor- "rows of the widow with her tender orphans;

" nothing can be more pleaſing, unleſs it be " their ſparkling eyes, their burſting tears, and " their uplifted hands, the artleſs expreſſions of " unfeigned gratitude for unexpected favours. " Such ſcenes will frequently occur whenever " men ſhall have power to diſpoſe of their own " property."

I conceive it to be almoſt impoſſible that any perſon could be much engaged in ſuch ſcenes without daily making advances in virtue. No exerciſe of our affections can have a more evident tendency to purify and exalt the human mind. It is almoſt excluſively this ſpecies of charity that bleſſeth him that gives; and, in a general view, it is almoſt excluſively this ſpecies of charity which bleſſeth him that takes; at leaſt it may be aſſerted, that there is hardly any other mode of exerciſing our charity, in which large ſums can be diſtributed, without a greater chance of producing evil than good.

The diſcretionary power of giving or withholding relief, which is, to a certain extent, veſted in pariſh officers and juſtices, is of a very different nature, and will have a very different effect, from the diſcrimination which may be exerciſed by voluntary charity. Every man in this country, under certain circumſtances,

ſtances, is entitled by law to pariſh aſſiſtance; and unleſs his diſqualification be clearly proved, has a right to complain if it be withheld. The inquiries neceſſary to ſettle this point, and the extent of the relief to be granted, too often produce evaſion and lying on the part of the petitioner, and afford an opening to partiality and oppreſſion in the overſeer. If the propoſed relief be given, it is of courſe received with unthankfulneſs; and if it be denied, the party generally thinks himſelf ſeverely aggrieved, and feels reſentment and indignation at his treatment.

In the diſtribution of voluntary charity, nothing of this kind can take place. The perſon who receives it is made the proper ſubject of the pleaſurable ſenſation of gratitude; and thoſe who do not receive it cannot poſſibly conceive themſelves in the ſlighteſt degree injured. Every man has a right to do what he will with his own, and cannot, in juſtice, be called upon to render a reaſon why he gives in the one caſe, and abſtains from it in the other. This kind of deſpotic power, eſſential to voluntary charity, gives the greateſt facility to the ſelection of worthy objects of relief, without being accompanied by any ill conſequences; and has further

a moſt beneficial effect from the degree of uncertainty which muſt neceſſarily be attached to it. It is in the higheſt degree important to the general happineſs of the poor, that no man ſhould look to charity as a fund on which he may confidently depend. He ſhould be taught that his own exertions, his own induſtry and foreſight, were his only juſt ground of dependence; that if theſe failed, aſſiſtance in his diſtreſſes could only be the ſubject of rational hope, and that even the foundation of this hope muſt be in his own good conduct, and the conſciouſneſs that he had not involved himſelf in theſe difficulties by his indolence or imprudence.

That in the diſtribution of our charity, we are under a ſtrong moral obligation to inculcate this leſſon on the poor by a proper diſcrimination, is a truth of which I cannot feel a doubt. If all could be completely relieved, and poverty baniſhed from the country, even at the expence of three-fourths of the fortunes of the rich, I would be the laſt to ſay a ſingle ſyllable againſt relieving all, and making the degree of diſtreſs alone the meaſure of our bounty. But as experience has proved, I believe without a ſingle exception, that poverty and miſery have always increaſed in proportion to the quantity of indiſcriminate

criminate charity, are we not bound to infer, reaſoning as we uſually do from the laws of nature, that it is an intimation that ſuch a mode of diſtribution is not the proper office of benevolence.

The laws of nature ſay, with St. Paul, "If a "man will not work, neither ſhall he eat." They alſo ſay, that he is not raſhly to truſt to Providence. They appear indeed to be conſtant and uniform for the expreſs purpoſe of telling him what he is to truſt to, and that if he marry without being able to ſupport a family, he muſt expect ſevere want. Theſe intimations appear from the conſtitution of human nature to be abſolutely neceſſary, and to have a ſtrikingly beneficial tendency. If in the direction either of our public or our private charity we ſay, that though a man will not work, yet he ſhall eat; and though he marry without being able to ſupport a family, yet his family ſhall be ſupported; it is evident that we do not merely endeavour to mitigate the partial evils ariſing from general laws, but regularly and ſyſtematically to counteract the obviouſly beneficial effects of theſe general laws themſelves. And we cannot eaſily conceive that the Deity ſhould implant

any paſſion in the human breaſt for ſuch a purpoſe.

In the great courſe of human events, the beſt-founded expectations will ſometimes be diſappointed; and induſtry, prudence, and virtue, not only fail of their juſt reward, but be involved in unmerited calamities. Thoſe who are thus ſuffering in ſpite of the beſt-directed endeavours to avoid it, and from cauſes which they could not be expected to foreſee, are the the genuine objects of charity. In relieving theſe we exerciſe the appropriate office of benevolence, that of mitigating the partial evils ariſing from general laws; and in this direction of our charity therefore, we need not apprehend any ill conſequences. Such objects ought to be relieved, according to our means, liberally and adequately, even though the worthleſs were ſtarving.

When indeed this firſt claim on our benevolence was ſatisfied, we might then turn our attention to the idle and improvident; but the intereſts of human happineſs moſt clearly require that the relief which we afford them ſhould be ſcanty. We may perhaps take upon ourſelves, with great caution, to mitigate

tigate the puniſhments which they are ſuffering from the laws of nature, but on no account to remove them entirely. They are deſervedly at the bottom in the ſcale of ſociety; and if we raiſe them from this ſituation, we not only palpably defeat the end of benevolence, but commit a moſt glaring injuſtice to thoſe who are above them. They ſhould on no account be enabled to command ſo much of the neceſſaries of life, as can be obtained by the worſt-paid common labour. The browneſt bread, with the coarſeſt and ſcantieſt apparel, is the utmoſt which they ſhould have the means of purchaſing.

It is evident that theſe reaſonings do not apply to thoſe caſes of urgent diſtreſs ariſing from diſaſtrous accidents, unconnected with habits of indolence and improvidence. If a man break a leg or an arm, we are not to ſtop to inquire into his moral character before we lend him our aſſiſtance; but in this caſe we are perfectly conſiſtent, and the touchſtone of utility completely juſtifies our conduct. By affording the moſt indiſcriminate aſſiſtance in this way, we are in little danger of encouraging people to break their arms and legs. According to the touchſtone of utility, the high approbation

which Chriſt gave to the conduct of the good Samaritan, who followed the immediate impulſe of his benevolence in relieving a ſtranger in the urgent diſtreſs of an accident, does not, in the ſmalleſt degree, contradict the expreſſion of St. Paul, "If a man will not work, neither "ſhall he eat."

We are not however, in any caſe, to loſe a preſent opportunity of doing good, from the mere ſuppoſition that we may poſſibly meet with a worthier object. In all doubtful caſes, it may ſafely be laid down as our duty to follow the natural impulſe of our benevolence; but when in fulfilling our obligation as reaſonable beings to attend to the conſequences of our actions, we have, from our own experience and that of others, drawn the concluſion, that the exerciſe of our benevolence in one mode is prejudicial, and in another is beneficial, in its effects, we are certainly bound, as moral agents, to check our natural propenſities in the one direction, and to encourage them and acquire the habits of exerciſing them, in the other.

CHAP. X.

Different plans of improving the condition of the Poor conſidered.

In the diſtribution of our charity, or in any efforts which we may make to better the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety, there is another point relating to the main argument of this work, to which we muſt be particularly attentive. We muſt on no account do any thing which tends directly to encourage marriage, or to remove, in any regular and ſyſtematic manner, that inequality of circumſtances which ought always to exiſt between the ſingle man and the man with a family. The writers who have beſt underſtood the principle of population appear to me all to have fallen into very important errors on this point.

Sir James Steuart, who is fully aware of what he calls vicious procreation, and of the miſery that attends a redundant population, recommends, notwithſtanding, the general eſtabliſhment of foundling hoſpitals; the taking of children under certain circumſtances, from their

parents, and ſupporting them at the expence of the ſtate; and particularly laments the inequality of condition between the married and ſingle man, ſo ill-proportioned to their reſpective wants[a]. He forgets, in theſe inſtances, that if, without the encouragement to multiplication, of foundling hoſpitals, or of public ſupport for the children of ſome married perſons, and under the diſcouragement of great pecuniary diſadvantages on the ſide of the married man, population be ſtill redundant, which is evinced by the inability of the poor to maintain all their children, it is a clear proof that the funds deſtined for the maintenance of labour cannot properly ſupport a greater population; and that if further encouragements to multiplication be given and diſcouragements removed, the reſult muſt be, an increaſe ſomewhere or other of that vicious procreation which he ſo juſtly reprobates.

Mr. Townſend, who in his diſſertation on the Poor Laws, has treated this ſubject with great ſkill and perſpicuity, appears to me to conclude with a propoſal which violates the principles on which he had reaſoned ſo well. He wiſhes to make the benefit clubs, or friendly

[a] Political Œconomy, vol. i. b. i. c. xii.

ſocieties,

ſocieties, which are now voluntarily eſtabliſhed in many pariſhes, compulſory and univerſal; and propoſes as a regulation, that an unmarried man ſhould pay a fourth part of his wages, and a married man with four children, not more than a thirtieth part[a].

I muſt firſt remark, that the moment theſe ſubſcriptions are made compulſory, they will neceſſarily operate exactly like a direct tax upon labour, which as Dr. Smith juſtly ſtates, will always be paid, and in a more expenſive manner, by the conſumer. The landed intereſt therefore, would receive no relief from this plan, but would pay the ſame ſum as at preſent, only in the advanced price of labour and of commodities, inſtead of in the pariſh rates. A compulſory ſubſcription of this kind would have almoſt all the ill effects of the preſent ſyſtem of relief, and though altered in name would ſtill poſſeſs the eſſential ſpirit of the poor laws.

Dean Tucker, in ſome remarks on a plan of the ſame kind, propoſed by Mr. Pew, obſerved, that after much talk and reflection on the ſubject, he had come to the concluſion, that they muſt be voluntary aſſociations, and not compulſory aſſemblies. A voluntary ſubſcription is

[a] Diſſertation on the Poor Laws, p. 89. 2d. edit. 1787.

like

like a tax upon a luxury, and does not neceſſarily raiſe the price of labour.

It ſhould be recollected alſo, that in a voluntary aſſociation of a ſmall extent, over which each individual member can exerciſe a ſuperintendence, it is highly probable that the original agreements will all be ſtrictly fulfilled, or if they be not, every man may at leaſt have the redreſs of withdrawing himſelf from the club. But in an univerſal compulſory ſubſcription, which muſt neceſſarily become a national concern, there would be no ſecurity whatever for the fulfilment of the original agreements; and when the funds failed, which they certainly would do, when all the idle and diſſolute were included, inſtead of ſome of the moſt induſtrious and provident, as at preſent, a larger ſubſcription would probably be demanded, and no man would have the right to refuſe it. The evil would thus go on increaſing as the poor rates do now. If indeed the aſſiſtance given were always ſpecific, and on no account to be increaſed, as in the preſent voluntary aſſociations, this would certainly be a ſtriking advantage; but the ſame advantage might be completely attained by a ſimilar diſtribution of the ſums collected by the pariſh rates. On the whole therefore,

therefore, it appears to me that if the friendly ſocieties were made univerſal and compulſory, it would be merely a different mode of collecting pariſh rates; and any particular mode of diſtribution might be as well adopted upon one ſyſtem as upon the other.

With regard to the propoſal of making ſingle men pay a fourth part of their earnings weekly, and married men with families only a thirtieth part, it would evidently operate as a heavy fine upon bachelors, and a high bounty upon children; and is therefore directly adverſe to the general ſpirit in which Mr. Townſend's excellent diſſertation is written. Before he introduces this propoſal, he lays it down as a general principle, that no ſyſtem for the relief of the poor can be good which does not regulate population by the demand for labour[a]; but this propoſal clearly tends to encourage population without any reference to the demand for labour, and puniſhes a young man for his prudence in refraining from marriage, at a time perhaps, when this demand is ſo ſmall, that the wages of labour are totally inadequate to the ſupport of a family. I ſhould be averſe to any compulſory ſyſtem whatever for the poor; but certainly if

[a] P. 84.

ſingle

ſingle men were compelled to pay a contribution for the future contingencies of the married ſtate, they ought in juſtice to receive a benefit proportioned to the period of their privation; and the man who had contributed a fourth of his earnings for merely one year, ought not to be put upon a level with him who has contributed this proportion for ten years.

Mr. Arthur Young, in moſt of his works, appears clearly to underſtand the principle of population, and is fully aware of the evils which muſt neceſſarily reſult from an increaſe of people beyond the demand for labour and the means of comfortable ſubſiſtence. In his tour through France he has particularly laboured this point, and ſhown moſt forcibly the miſery which reſults in that country from the exceſs of population occaſioned by the too great diviſion of property. Such an increaſe he juſtly calls merely a multiplication of wretchedneſs. "Couples marry and procreate on the idea, "not the reality, of a maintenance; they in- "creaſe beyond the demand of towns and "manufactures; and the conſequence is, diſ- "treſs, and numbers dying of diſeaſes ariſing "from inſufficient nouriſhment[a]."

[a] Travels in France, vol. i. c. xii. p. 408.

In another place he quotes a very ſenſible paſſage from the report of the committee of mendicity, which, alluding to the evils of over-population, concludes thus, "Il faudroit enfin "neceſſairement que le prix de travail baiſſat "par la plus grand concurrence de travailleurs, "d'ou reſulteroit un indigence complette pour "ceux qui ne trouveroient pas de travail, et "une ſubſiſtence incomplette pour ceux mêmes "aux quels il ne ſeroit pas refuſé." And in remarking upon this paſſage, he obſerves, "France itſelf affords an irrefragable proof of "the truth of theſe ſentiments; for I am "clearly of opinion, from the obſervations I "made in every province of the kingdom, "that her population is ſo much beyond the "proportion of her induſtry and labour, that "ſhe would be much more powerful and in-"finitely more flouriſhing, if ſhe had five or "ſix millions leſs of inhabitants. From her "too great population ſhe preſents in every "quarter, ſuch ſpectacles of wretchedneſs as "are abſolutely inconſiſtent with that degree "of national felicity which ſhe was capable of "attaining, even under the old government. "A traveller much leſs attentive than I was to "objects of this kind, muſt ſee at every turn

"moſt

" moſt unequivocal ſigns of diſtreſs. That theſe " ſhould exiſt, no one can wonder, who con- " ſiders the price of labour and of proviſions, " and the miſery into which a ſmall riſe in the " price of wheat throws the lower claſſes[a]."

" If you would ſee," he ſays, " a diſtrict " with as little diſtreſs in it as is conſiſtent " with the political ſyſtem of the old govern- " ment of France, you muſt aſſuredly go where " there are no little properties at all. You muſt " viſit the great farms in Beauce, Picardy, part " of Normandy, and Artois, and there you will " find no more population than what is regu- " larly employed and regularly paid; and if in " ſuch diſtricts you ſhould, contrary to this " rule, meet with much diſtreſs, it is twenty to " one but that it is in a pariſh which has ſome " commons, which tempt the poor to have " cattle—to have property—and in conſequence " miſery. When you are engaged in this po- " litical tour, finiſh it by ſeeing England, and " I will ſhow you a ſet of peaſants well clothed " well nouriſhed, tolerably drunken from ſuper- " fluity, well lodged, and at their eaſe; and yet " amongſt them, not one in a thouſand has " either land or cattle[b]." A little further on,

[a] Travels in France, vol. i. c. xvii. p. 469. [b] Id. p. 471.

alluding to encouragements to marriage, he ſays of France; "the predominant evil of the king-"dom is the having ſo great a population, "that ſhe can neither employ nor feed it; why "then encourage marriage? would you breed "more people becauſe you have more already "than you know what to do with? You have "ſo great a competition for food, that your "people are ſtarving or in miſery; and you "would encourage the production of more to "increaſe that competition. It may almoſt "be queſtioned whether the contrary policy "ought not to be embraced; whether diffi-"culties ſhould not be laid on the marriage "of thoſe who cannot make it appear that they "have the proſpect of maintaining the children "that ſhall be the fruit of it? But why en-"courage marriages which are ſure to take "place in all ſituations in which they ought to "take place? There is no inſtance to be found "of plenty of regular employment being firſt "eſtabliſhed where marriages have not fol-"lowed in a proportionate degree. The po-"licy therefore, at beſt, is uſeleſs, and may be "pernicious."

After having once ſo clearly underſtood the principle of population as to expreſs theſe and many

many other ſentiments on the ſubject, equally juſt and important, it is not a little ſurpriſing to find Mr. Young in a pamphlet, intitled, *The Queſtion of Scarcity plainly ſtated, and Remedies conſidered, (publiſhed in* 1800), obſerving, that " the means which would of all others perhaps " tend moſt ſurely to prevent future ſcarcities " ſo oppreſſive to the poor as the preſent, " would be to ſecure to every country labourer " in the kingdom, that has three children and " upwards, half an acre of land for potatoes, " and graſs enough to feed one or two cows[a]. " * * * * If each had his ample potatoe ground " and a cow, the price of wheat would be of " little more conſequence to them, than it is " to their brethren in Ireland."

" Every one admits the ſyſtem to be good, " but the queſtion is how to enforce it."

I was by no means aware, that the excellence of the ſyſtem had been ſo generally admitted. For myſelf I ſtrongly proteſt againſt being included in the general term of *every one*, as I ſhould conſider the adoption of this ſyſtem, as the moſt cruel and fatal blow to the happineſs of the lower claſſes of people in this country, that they had ever received.

[a] P. 77.

Mr.

Mr. Young however goes on to ſay, that "The magnitude of the object ſhould make us "diſregard any difficulties but ſuch as are in- "ſuperable: none ſuch would probably occur "if ſomething like the following means were "reſorted to.

"I. Where there are common paſtures, to "give to a labouring man having chil- "dren, a right to demand an allotment propor- "tioned to the family, to be ſet out by the "pariſh officers, &c. * * * and a cow bought. "Such labourer to have both for life, paying "40s. a year till the price of the cow, &c. was "reimburſed: at his death to go to the labour- "er having the moſt numerous family, for life, "paying ſhillings a week to the widow "of his predeceſſor.

"II. Labourers thus demanding allotments "by reaſon of their families to have land aſ- "ſigned and cows bought, till the proportion ſo "allotted amounts to one of the extent of "the common.

"III. In pariſhes where there are no com- "mons, and the quality of the land adequate, "every cottager having children, to "whoſe cottage there is not within a given "time land ſufficient for a cow, and half an

" acre of potatoes, aſſigned at a fair average " rent, ſubject to appeal to the ſeſſions, to have " a right to demand ſhillings per week " of the pariſh for every child, till ſuch land be " aſſigned; leaving to landlords and tenants the " means of doing it. Cows to be found by the " pariſh, under an annual reimburſement[a]."

" The great object is, by means of milk and " potatoes, to take the maſs of the country poor " from the conſumption of wheat, and to give " them ſubſtitutes equally wholeſome and nou- " riſhing, and as independent of ſcarcities, na- " tural and artificial, as the providence of the " Almighty will admit[b]."

Would not this plan operate in the moſt direct manner, as an encouragement to marriage and bounty on children, which Mr. Young has with ſo much juſtice reprobated in his travels in France? and does he ſeriouſly think that it would be an eligible thing to feed the maſs of the people in this country on milk and potatoes, and make them as independent of the price of corn, and of the demand for labour, as their brethren in Ireland?

The ſpecific cauſe of the poverty and miſery of the lower claſſes of people in France and Ireland is, that from the extreme ſubdiviſion of

[a] P. 78. [b] P. 79.

property

property in the one country, and the facility of obtaining a cabin and potatoes in the other, a population is brought into exiſtence, which is not demanded by the quantity of capital and employment in the country; and the conſequence of which muſt therefore neceſſarily be, as is very juſtly expreſſed in the report of the committee of mendicity before mentioned, to lower in general the price of labour by too great competition; from which muſt reſult complete indigence to thoſe who cannot find employment, and an incomplete ſubſiſtence even to thoſe who can.

The obvious tendency of Mr. Young's plan is, by encouraging marriage and furniſhing a cheap food, independent of the price of corn, and of courſe of the demand for labour, to place the lower claſſes of people exactly in this ſituation.

It may perhaps be ſaid, that our poor laws at preſent regularly encourage marriage and children, by diſtributing relief in proportion to the ſize of families; and that this plan, which is propoſed as a ſubſtitute, would merely do the ſame thing in a leſs objectionable manner. But ſurely, in endeavouring to get rid of the evil of the poor laws, we ought not to retain their moſt

pernicious quality: and Mr. Young muſt know as well as I do, that the principal reaſon why poor laws have invariably been found ineffectual in the relief of the poor is, that they tend to encourage a population which is not regulated by the demand for labour. Mr. Young himſelf, indeed, expreſsly takes notice of this effect in England, and obſerves, that notwithſtanding the unrivalled proſperity of her manufactures, "population is ſometimes too active, "as we ſee clearly by the dangerous increaſe of "poor's rates in country villages[a]."

But the fact is, that Mr. Young's plan would be incomparably more powerful in encouraging a population beyond the demand for labour, than our preſent poor laws. A laudable repugnance to the receiving of pariſh relief, ariſing partly from a ſpirit of independence not yet extinct, and partly from the diſagreeable mode in which the relief is given, undoubtedly deters many from marrying with a certainty of falling on the pariſh; and the proportion of births and marriages to the whole population, which has before been noticed, clearly proves that the poor laws do not encourage marriage ſo much as might be expected from theory. But the caſe

[a] Travels in France, vol. i. c. xvii. p. 470.

would be very different if, when a labourer had an early marriage in contemplation, the terrific forms of workhouſes and pariſh officers which might diſturb his reſolution, were to be exchanged for the faſcinating viſions of land and cows. If the love of property, as Mr. Young has repeatedly ſaid, will make a man do much, it would be rather ſtrange if it would not make him marry, an action to which, it appears from experience, that he is by no means diſinclined.

The population which would be thus called into being, would be ſupported by the extended cultivation of potatoes, and would of courſe go on without any reference to the demand for labour. In the preſent ſtate of things, notwithſtanding the flouriſhing condition of our manufactures, and the numerous checks to our population, there is no practical problem ſo difficult as to find employment for the poor; but this difficulty would evidently be aggravated a hundred fold, under the circumſtances here ſuppoſed.

In Ireland, or in any other country, where the common food is potatoes, and every man who wiſhes to marry may obtain a piece of ground ſufficient when planted with this root, to ſupport a family, prizes may be given till the trea-

ſury is exhauſted for eſſays on the beſt means of employing the poor; but till ſome ſtop to the progreſs of population naturally ariſing from this ſtate of things takes place, the object in view is really a phyſical impoſſibility[a].

Mr. Young has intimated, that if the people were fed upon milk and potatoes, they would be more independent of ſcarcities than at preſent; but why this ſhould be the caſe I really cannot comprehend. Undoubtedly people who live upon potatoes will not be much affected by a ſcarcity of wheat; but is there any contradiction in the ſuppoſition of a failure in the crops of potatoes? I believe it is generally underſtood that they are more liable to ſuffer damage during the winter than grain. From the much greater quantity of food yielded by a given piece of land, when planted with potatoes, than under any other kind of cultivation, it would

[a] Dr. Crumpe's prize eſſay on the beſt means of finding employment for the people, is an excellent treatiſe, and contains much valuable information; but till the capital of the country is better proportioned to its population, it is perfectly chimerical to expect ſucceſs in any project of the kind. I am alſo ſtrongly diſpoſed to believe that the indolent and turbulent habits of the lower Iriſh can never be corrected, while the potatoe ſyſtem enables them to increaſe ſo much beyond the regular demand for labour.

naturally

naturally happen, that for ſome time after the introduction of this root as the general food of the lower claſſes of people, a greater quantity would be grown than was demanded, and they would live in plenty. Mr. Young, in his travels through France, obſerves, that, "In diſtricts "which contain immenſe quantities of waſte "land of a certain degree of fertility, as in the "roots of the Pyrenees, belonging to com- "munities ready to ſell them, economy and "induſtry, animated with the views of ſettling "and marrying, flouriſh greatly; in ſuch neigh- "bourhoods ſomething like an American in- "creaſe takes place, and if the land be cheap "little diſtreſs is found. But as procreation "goes on rapidly under ſuch circumſtances, the "leaſt check to ſubſiſtence is attended with "great miſery; as waſtes becoming dearer, or "the beſt portions being ſold, or difficulties "ariſing in the acquiſition; all which circum- "ſtances I met with in thoſe mountains. The "moment that any impediment happens the "diſtreſs of ſuch people will be proportioned "to the activity and vigour which had ani- "mated population[a]."

This deſcription will apply exactly to what

[a] Travels in France, vol. i. c. xvii. p. 409.

would take place in this country, on the diſtribution of ſmall portions of land to the common people, and the introduction of potatoes as their general food. For a time the change might appear beneficial, and of courſe the idea of property would make it, at firſt, highly acceptable to the poor; but as Mr. Young in another place ſays, "You preſently arrive at the limit beyond "which, the earth, cultivate it as you pleaſe, "will feed no more mouths; yet thoſe ſimple "manners which inſtigate to marriage ſtill "continue; what then is the conſequence but "the moſt dreadful miſery imaginable[a]."

When the commons were all divided and difficulties began to occur in procuring potatoe grounds, the habit of early marriages which had been introduced, would occaſion the moſt complicated diſtreſs; and when from the increaſing population, and diminiſhing ſources of ſubſiſtence, the average growth of potatoes was not more than the average conſumption, a ſcarcity of potatoes would be, in every reſpect, as probable as a ſcarcity of wheat at preſent, and when it did arrive, it would be beyond all compariſon more dreadful.

When the common people of a country live

[a] Travels in France, vol. i. c. xvii. p. 409.

principally

principally upon the deareſt grain, as they do in England on wheat, they have great reſources in a ſcarcity; and barley, oats, rice, cheap ſoups, and potatoes, all preſent themſelves as leſs expenſive, yet at the ſame time wholeſome means of nouriſhment; but when their habitual food is the loweſt in this ſcale, they appear to be abſolutely without reſource, except in the bark of trees, like the poor Swedes; and a great portion of them muſt neceſſarily be ſtarved. Wheaten bread, roaſt beef, and turbot, which might not fail at the ſame time, are indeed in themſelves unexceptionable ſubſtitutes for potatoes, and would probably be accepted as ſuch without murmuring by the common people; but the misfortune is, that a large population which had been habitually ſupported by milk and potatoes, would find it difficult to obtain theſe ſubſtitutes in ſufficient quantities, even if the whole benevolence of the kingdom were called into action for the purpoſe.

The wages of labour will always be regulated by the proportion of the ſupply to the demand. And as, upon the potatoe ſyſtem, a ſupply more than adequate to the demand would very ſoon take place, and this ſupply might be continued at a very cheap rate, on account of the cheapneſs

neſs of the food which would furniſh it, the common price of labour would ſoon be regulated principally by the price of potatoes inſtead of the price of wheat, as at preſent; and the rags and wretched cabins of Ireland would follow of courſe.

When the demand for labour occaſionally exceeds the ſupply, and wages are regulated by the price of the deareſt grain, they will generally be ſuch as to yield ſomething beſides mere food, and the common people may be able to obtain decent houſes and decent clothing. If the contraſt between the ſtate of the French and Engliſh labourers which Mr. Young has drawn, be in any degree near the truth, the advantage on the ſide of England has been occaſioned preciſely and excluſively by theſe two circumſtances; and if by the adoption of milk and potatoes as the general food of the common people, theſe circumſtances were totally altered, ſo as to make the ſupply of labour conſtantly in a great exceſs above the demand for it, and regulate wages by the price of the cheapeſt food, the advantage would be immediately loſt, and no efforts of benevolence could prevent the moſt general and abject poverty.

Upon the ſame principle it would by no means

means be eligible that the cheap ſoups of Count Rumford ſhould be adopted as the general food of the common people. They are excellent inventions for public inſtitutions, and as occaſional reſources; but if they were once univerſally adopted by the poor, it would be impoſſible to prevent the price of labour from being regulated by them; and the labourer, though at firſt he might have more to ſpare for other expences, beſides food, would ultimately have much leſs to ſpare than before.

The deſirable thing, with a view to the happineſs of the common people ſeems to be, that their habitual food ſhould be dear, and their wages regulated by it; but that, in a ſcarcity, or other occaſional diſtreſs, the cheaper food ſhould be readily and cheerfully adopted[a]. With a view of rendering this tranſition eaſier, and at the ſame time of making a uſeful diſtinction between thoſe who are dependent on pariſh relief, and thoſe who are not, I ſhould think that one plan which Mr. Young propoſes would be

[a] It is certainly to be wiſhed that every cottage in England ſhould have a garden to it, well ſtocked with vegetables. A little variety of food is in every point of view highly uſeful. Potatoes are undoubtedly a moſt valuable aſſiſtance, though I ſhould be very ſorry ever to ſee them the principal dependence of our labourers.

extremely

extremely eligible. This is " to paſs an act " prohibiting relief, ſo far as ſubſiſtence is con- " cerned, in any other manner than by pota- " toes, rice, and ſoup, not merely as a meaſure " of the moment, but permanently[a]." I do not think that this plan would neceſſarily introduce theſe articles as the common food of the lower claſſes; and if it merely made the tranſition to them in periods of diſtreſs eaſier, and at the ſame time, drew a more marked line than at preſent, between dependence and independence, it would have a very beneficial effect.

As it is acknowledged that the introduction of milk and potatoes, or of cheap ſoups, as the general food of the lower claſſes of people, would lower the price of labour, perhaps ſome cold politician might propoſe to adopt the ſyſtem, with a view of underſelling foreigners in the markets of Europe. I ſhould not envy the feelings which could ſuggeſt ſuch a propoſal. I really cannot conceive any thing much more deteſtable, than the idea of knowingly condemning the labourers of this country to the rags and

[a] Queſtion of Scarcity, &c. p. 80. This might be done, at leaſt with regard to workhouſes. In aſſiſting the poor at their own homes, it might be ſubject to ſome practical difficulties.

wretched

wretched cabins of Ireland, for the purpoſe of ſelling a few more broad cloths and calicoes[a]. The

[a] In this obſervation I have not the leaſt idea of alluding to Mr. Young, who, I firmly believe, ardently wiſhes to meliorate the condition of the lower claſſes of people, though I do not think that his plan would effect the object in view. He either did not ſee thoſe conſequences which I apprehend from it; or he has a better opinion of the happineſs of the common people in Ireland than I have. In his Iriſh tour he ſeemed much ſtruck with the plenty of potatoes which they poſſeſſed, and the abſence of all apprehenſion of want. Had he travelled in 1800 and 1801, his impreſſions would by all accounts have been very different. From the facility which has hitherto prevailed in Ireland of procuring potatoe grounds, ſcarcities have certainly been rare, and all the effects of the ſyſtem have not yet been felt, though certainly enough to make it appear very far from deſirable.

Mr. Young has ſince purſued his idea more in detail, in a pamphlet entitled, *An Inquiry into the Propriety of applying Waſtes to the better Maintenance and Support of the Poor.* But the impreſſion on my mind is ſtill the ſame; and it appears to me calculated to aſſimilate the condition of the labourers of this country to that of the lower claſſes of the Iriſh. Mr. Young ſeems, in a moſt unaccountable manner, to have forgotten all his general principles on this ſubject. He has treated the queſtion of a proviſion for the poor, as if it was merely, How to provide in the cheapeſt and beſt manner for a *given number* of people? If this had been the ſole queſtion, it would never have taken ſo many hundred years to reſolve. But the real queſtion is, How to provide for thoſe who are in want, in ſuch a manner, as to prevent a continual accumulation

The wealth and power of nations are, after all, only deſirable as they contribute to happineſs. In this point of view, I ſhould be very far from undervaluing them, conſidering them, in general, as abſolutely neceſſary means to attain the end; but if any particular caſe ſhould occur, in which they appeared to be in direct oppoſition to each other, we cannot rationally doubt which ought to be poſtponed.

Fortunately however, even on the narroweſt political principles, the adoption of ſuch a ſyſtem would not anſwer. It has always been obſerved, that thoſe who work chiefly on their own property, work very indolently and unwillingly when employed for others; and it muſt neceſſarily happen, when, from the general adoption of a very cheap food, the population of a country increaſes conſiderably beyond the demand for labour, that habits of idleneſs and turbulence will be generated, moſt peculiarly unfavourable to a flouriſhing ſtate of manu-

accumulation of their numbers? and it will readily occur to the reader, that a plan of giving them land and cows cannot promiſe much ſucceſs in this reſpect. If, after all the commons had been divided, the poor laws were ſtill to continue in force, no good reaſon can be aſſigned why the rates ſhould not in a few years be as high as they are preſent, independently of all that had been expended in the purchaſe of land and ſtock.

factures.

factures. In ſpite of the cheapneſs of labour in Ireland, there are few manufactures which can be prepared in that country for foreign ſale ſo cheap as in England: and this is in great meaſure owing to the want of thoſe induſtrious habits which can only be produced by regular employment.

CHAP.

CHAP. XL.

Of the neceſſity of general principles on this ſubject.

It has been obſerved by Hume, that of all ſciences, there is none where firſt appearances are more deceitful than in politics[a]. The remark is undoubtedly very juſt, and is moſt peculiarly applicable to that department of the ſcience which relates to the modes of improving the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety.

We are continually hearing declamations againſt theory and theoriſts, by men who pride themſelves upon the diſtinction of being practical. It muſt be acknowledged that bad theories are very bad things, and the authors of them uſeleſs, and ſometimes pernicious members of ſociety. But theſe advocates of practice do not ſeem to be aware, that they themſelves very often come under this deſcription, and that a great part of them may be claſſed among the moſt miſchievous theoriſts of their time. When a man faithfully relates any facts which have come

[a] Eſſay xi. vol. i. p. 431. 8vo.

within

within the ſcope of his own obſervation, however confined it may have been, he undoubtedly adds to the ſum of general knowledge, and confers a benefit on ſociety. But when from this confined experience, from the management of his own little farm, or the details of the workhouſe in his neighbourhod, he draws a general inference, as is very frequently the caſe, he then at once erects himſelf into a theoriſt, and is the more dangerous, becauſe experience being the only juſt foundation for theory, people are often caught merely by the ſound of the word, and do not ſtop to make the diſtinction between that partial experience which, on ſuch ſubjects, is no foundation whatever for a juſt theory, and that general experience, on which alone a juſt theory can be founded.

There are perhaps few ſubjects on which human ingenuity has been more exerted, than in the endeavour to meliorate the condition of the poor; and there is certainly no ſubject in which it has ſo completely failed. The queſtion between the theoriſt who calls himſelf practical, and the genuine theoriſt is, whether this ſhould prompt us to look into all the holes and corners of workhouſes, and content ourſelves with mulcting the pariſh officers for their waſte of

cheeſe parings and candle ends, and with diſtributing more ſoups and potatoes; or to recur to general principles which ſhow us at once the cauſe of the failure, and prove that the ſyſtem has been from the beginning radically erroneous. There is no ſubject to which general principles have been ſo ſeldom applied; and yet in the whole compaſs of human knowledge, I doubt, if there be one in which it is ſo dangerous to loſe ſight of them; becauſe the partial and immediate effects of a particular mode of giving aſſiſtance are ſo often directly oppoſite to the general and permanent effects.

It has been obſerved in particular diſtricts, where cottagers are poſſeſſed of ſmall pieces of land, and are in the habit of keeping cows, that during the late ſcarcities ſome of them were able to ſupport themſelves without pariſh aſſiſtance, and others with comparatively little[a].

According to the partial view in which this ſubject has been always contemplated, a general inference has been drawn from ſuch inſtances, that if we could place all our labourers in a ſimilar ſituation, they would all be equally com-

[a] See an Inquiry into the State of Cottagers in the Counties of Lincoln and Rutland by Robert Gourlay. Annals of Agriculture, vol. xxxvii. p. 514.

fortable,

fortable, and equally independent of the pariſh. This is an inference however, that by no means follows. The advantage which cottagers who at preſent keep cows enjoy, ariſes in a great meaſure from its being peculiar, and would be conſiderably diminiſhed if it were made general.

A farmer or gentleman has, we will ſuppoſe, a certain number of cottages on his farm. Being a liberal man, and liking to ſee all the people about him comfortable, he may join a piece of land to his cottages ſufficient to keep one or two cows, and give beſides high wages. His labourers will of courſe live in plenty, and be able to rear up large families; but his farm may not require many hands; and though he may chooſe to pay thoſe that he employs well, he will not probably wiſh to have more labourers on his land than his work requires. He does not therefore build more houſes; and the children of the labourers whom he employs muſt evidently emigrate and ſettle in other countries. While ſuch a ſyſtem continues peculiar to certain families, or certain diſtricts, the emigrants would eaſily be able to find work in other places; and it cannot be doubted that the individual labourers employed on theſe farms are in

an enviable ſituation, and ſuch as we might naturally wiſh was the lot of all our labourers. But it is perfectly clear that ſuch a ſyſtem could not, in the nature of things, poſſeſs the ſame advantages, if it were made general; becauſe there would then be no countries to which the children could emigrate with the ſame proſpect of finding work. Population would evidently increaſe beyond the demand of towns and manufactories, and the price of labour would univerſally fall.

It ſhould be obſerved alſo, that one of the reaſons why the labourers who at preſent keep cows are ſo comfortable, is, that they are able to make a conſiderable profit of the milk which they do not uſe themſelves, an advantage which would evidently be very much diminiſhed if the ſyſtem were univerſal. And though they were certainly able to ſtruggle through the late ſcarcities with leſs aſſiſtance than their neighbours, as might naturally be expected, from their having other reſources beſides the article which in thoſe individual years was ſcarce; yet if the ſyſtem were univerſal, there can be no reaſon aſſigned why they would not be ſubject to ſuffer as much from a ſcarcity of graſs and a mortality

mortality among cows[a], as our common labourers do now from a ſcarcity of wheat. We ſhould be extremely cautious therefore of truſting to ſuch appearances, and of drawing a general inference from this kind of partial experience.

The main principle on which the ſociety for increaſing the comforts, and bettering the condition of the poor, profeſſes to proceed is excellent. To give effect to that maſterſpring of induſtry, the deſire of bettering our condition[b], is the true mode of improving the ſtate of the lower claſſes; and we may ſafely agree with Mr. Bernard, in one of his able prefaces, that whatever encourages and promotes habits of induſtry, prudence, foreſight, virtue, and cleanlineſs, among the poor, is beneficial to them and to the country; and whatever removes or diminiſhes the incitements to any of theſe qualities, is de-

[a] At preſent the loſs of a cow which muſt now and then happen, is generally remedied by a petition and ſubſcription, and as the event is conſidered as a moſt ſerious misfortune to a labourer, theſe petitions are for the moſt part attended to; but if the cow ſyſtem were univerſal, loſſes would occur ſo frequently that they could not poſſibly be repaired in the ſame way, and families would be continually dropping from comparative plenty into want.

[b] Preface to vol. ii. of the Reports.

trimental to the ſtate, and pernicious to the individual[a].

Mr. Bernard indeed himſelf ſeems in general to be fully aware of the difficulties which the ſociety has to contend with in the accompliſhment of its object. But ſtill it appears to be in ſome danger of falling into the error before alluded to, of drawing general inferences from inſufficient experience. Without adverting to the plans reſpecting cheaper foods and pariſh ſhops, recommended by individuals, the beneficial effects of which depend entirely upon their being peculiar to certain families or certain pariſhes, and would be loſt if they were general, by lowering the wages of labour; I ſhall only notice one obſervation of a more comprehenſive nature, which occurs in the preface to the ſecond volume of the Reports. It is there remarked, that the experience of the ſociety ſeemed to warrant the concluſion, that the beſt mode of relieving the poor was, by aſſiſting them at their own homes, and placing out their children as ſoon as poſſible in different employments, apprenticeſhips, &c. I really believe that this is the beſt, and it is certainly the moſt agreeable mode, in which occaſional and diſcri-

[a] Preface to vol. iii. of the Reports.

minate

minate aſſiſtance can be given. But it is evident that it muſt be done with caution, and cannot be adopted as a general principle, and made the foundation of univerſal practice. It is open exactly to the ſame objection as the cow ſyſtem which has juſt been noticed, and that part of the act of the 43d of Elizabeth which directs the overſeers to employ and provide for the children of the poor. A particular pariſh, where all the children, as ſoon as they were of a proper age, were taken from their parents and placed out in proper ſituations, might be very comfortable; but if the ſyſtem were general, and the poor ſaw that all their children would be thus provided for, every employment would preſently be overſtocked with hands, and the conſequence need not be again repeated.

Nothing can be more clear than that it is within the power of money, and of the exertions of the rich, adequately to relieve a particular family, a particular pariſh, and even a particular diſtrict. But it will be equally clear, if we reflect a moment on the ſubject, that it is totally out of their power to relieve the whole country in the ſame way; at leaſt without providing a regular vent for the overflowing numbers in emigration, or without the prevalence of a particular virtue

among the poor, which the diſtribution of this aſſiſtance tends obviouſly to diſcourage.

Even induſtry itſelf is, in this reſpect, not very different from money. A man who poſſeſſes a certain portion of it, above what is uſually poſſeſſed by his neighbours, will, in the actual ſtate of things, be almoſt ſure of a competent livelihood; but if all his neighbours were to become at once as induſtrious as himſelf, the abſolute portion of induſtry which he before poſſeſſed would no longer be a ſecurity againſt want. Hume fell into a very great error, when he aſſerted that "almoſt all the moral, as well "as natural evils of human life, ariſe from idleneſs;" and for the cure of theſe ills, required only that the whole ſpecies ſhould poſſeſs naturally an equal diligence with that which many individuals are able to attain by habit and reflection[a]. It is evident that this given degree of induſtry poſſeſſed by the whole ſpecies, if not combined with another virtue of which he takes no notice, would totally fail of reſcuing ſociety from want and miſery, and would ſcarcely remove a ſingle moral or phyſical evil of all thoſe to which he alludes.

I am aware of an objection which will, with

[a] Dialogues on Natural Religion, Part xi. p. 212.

great

great appearance of juſtice, be urged againſt the general tenour of theſe reaſonings. It will be ſaid, that to argue thus, is at once to object to every mode of aſſiſting the poor, as it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, to aſſiſt people individually, without altering their relative ſituation in ſociety, and proportionally depreſſing others; and that as thoſe who have families, are the perſons naturally moſt ſubject to diſtreſs, and as we are certainly not called upon to aſſiſt thoſe who do not want our aid, we muſt neceſſarily, if we act at all, relieve thoſe who have children, and thus encourage marriage and population.

I have already obſerved however, and I here repeat it again, that the general principles on theſe ſubjects ought not to be puſhed too far, though they ſhould always be kept in view; and that many caſes may occur in which the good reſulting from the relief of the preſent diſtreſs, may more than overbalance the evil to be apprehended from the remote conſequence.

All relief in inſtances of diſtreſs, not ariſing from idle and improvident habits, clearly comes under this deſcription; and in general it may be obſerved, that it is only that kind of *ſyſtematic* and *certain* relief, on which the poor can confidently

confidently depend, whatever may be their conduct, that violates general principles in ſuch a manner as to make it clear that the general conſequence is worſe than the particular evil.

Independently of this diſcriminate and occaſional aſſiſtance, the beneficial effects of which I have fully allowed in a preceding chapter, I have before endeavoured to ſhow, that much might be expected from a better and more general ſyſtem of education. Every thing that can be done in this way, has indeed a very peculiar value; becauſe education is one of thoſe advantages, which not only all may ſhare without interfering with each other, but the raiſing of one perſon may actually contribute to the raiſing of others. If, for inſtance, a man by education acquires that decent kind of pride, and thoſe juſter habits of thinking, which will prevent him from burdening ſociety with a family of children which he cannot ſupport, his conduct, as far as an individual inſtance can go, tends evidently to improve the condition of his fellow labourers; and a contrary conduct from ignorance, would tend as evidently to depreſs it.

I cannot help thinking alſo, that ſomething might be done towards bettering the ſituation of the poor by a general improvement of their cottages;

cottages, if care were taken, at the ſame time, not to make them ſo large as to allow of two families ſettling in them; and not to increaſe their number faſter than the demand for labour required. One of the moſt ſalutary, and leaſt pernicious checks to the frequency of early marriages in this country, is the difficulty of procuring a cottage, and the laudable habits which prompt a labourer rather to defer his marriage ſome years in the expectation of a vacancy, than to content himſelf with a wretched mud cabin, like thoſe in Ireland[a].

Even the cow ſyſtem, upon a more confined plan, might not be open to objection. With any view of making it a ſubſtitute for the Poor Laws, and of giving labourers a right to demand land and cows in proportion to their families; or of taking the common people from the conſumption of wheat, and feeding them

[a] Perhaps, however, this is not often left to his choice, on account of the fear which every pariſh has of increaſing its poor. There are many ways by which our poor laws operate in counteracting their firſt obvious tendency to increaſe population, and this is one of them. I have little doubt that it is almoſt excluſively owing to theſe counteracting cauſes, that we have been able to perſevere in this ſyſtem ſo long, and that the condition of the poor has not been ſo much injured by it as might have been expected.

on

on milk and potatoes, it appears to me, I confeſs, truly prepoſterous: but if it were ſo ordered as merely to provide a comfortable ſituation for the better and more induſtrious claſs of labourers, and to ſupply at the ſame time, a very important want among the poor in general, that of milk for their children, I think that it would be extremely beneficial, and might be made a very powerful incitement to habits of induſtry, economy, and prudence. With this view however, it is evident, that only a certain portion of the labourers in each pariſh could be embraced in the plan; that good conduct, and not mere diſtreſs, ſhould have the moſt valid claim to preference; that too much attention ſhould not be paid to the number of children; and that univerſally, thoſe who had ſaved money enough for the purchaſe of a cow, ſhould be preferred, to thoſe who required to be furniſhed with one by the pariſh[a].

[a] The act of Elizabeth which prohibited the building of cottages, unleſs four acres of land were annexed to them, is probably impracticable in a manufacturing country like England; but upon this principle, certainly the greateſt part of the poor might poſſeſs land; becauſe the difficulty of procuring ſuch cottages would always operate as a powerful check to their increaſe. The effect of ſuch a plan would be very different from that of Mr. Young.

To facilitate the ſaving of ſmall ſums of money for this purpoſe, and encourage young labourers to economize their earnings with a view to a proviſion for marriage, it might be extremely uſeful to have country banks, where the ſmalleſt ſums would be received, and a fair intereſt paid for them. At preſent, the few labourers who ſave a little money, are often greatly at a loſs to know what to do with it; and under ſuch circumſtances we cannot be much ſurpriſed that it ſhould ſometimes be ill employed, and laſt but a ſhort time. It would probably be eſſential to the ſucceſs of any plan of this kind, that the labourer ſhould be able to draw out his money whenever he wanted it, and have the moſt perfect liberty of diſpoſing of it in every reſpect as he pleaſed. Though we may regret, that money ſo hardly earned ſhould ſometimes be ſpent to little purpoſe; yet it ſeems to be a caſe in which we have no right to interfere; nor if we had, would it in a general view, be advantageous; becauſe the knowledge of poſſeſſing this liberty would be of more uſe in encouraging the practice of ſaving, than any reſtriction of it, in preventing the miſuſe of money ſo ſaved.

One ſhould undoubtedly be extremely unwilling

ling not to make as much uſe as poſſible of that known ſtimulus to induſtry and economy, the deſire of, and the attachment to property: but it ſhould be recollected, that the good effects of this ſtimulus ſhow themſelves principally when this property is to be procured, or preſerved, by perſonal exertions; and that they are by no means ſo general under other circumſtances. If any idle man with a family could demand and obtain a cow and ſome land, I ſhould expect to ſee both very often neglected.

It has been obſerved that thoſe cottagers who keep cows, are more induſtrious and more regular in their conduct, than thoſe who do not. This is probably true, and what might naturally be expected; but the inference that the way to make all people induſtrious is to give them cows, may by no means be quite ſo certain. Moſt of thoſe who keep cows at preſent have purchaſed them with the fruits of their own induſtry. It is therefore more juſt to ſay, that their induſtry has given them a cow, than that a cow has given them their induſtry; though I would by no means be underſtood to imply, that the ſudden poſſeſſion of property never generates induſtrious habits.

The practical good effects which have been already

already experienced, from cottagers keeping cows[a], ariſe in fact from the ſyſtem being nearly ſuch as the confined plan which I have mentioned. In the diſtricts where cottagers of this deſcription moſt abound, they do not bear a very large proportion to the population of the whole pariſh; they conſiſt in general of the better ſort of labourers, who have been able to purchaſe their own cows; and the peculiar comforts of their ſituation ariſe more from the relative, than the poſitive advantages which they poſſeſs.

From obſerving therefore their induſtry and comforts, we ſhould be very cautious of inferring that we could give the ſame induſtry and comforts to all the lower claſſes of people, by giving them the ſame poſſeſſions. There is nothing that has given riſe to ſuch a cloud of errors, as a confuſion between relative and poſitive, and between cauſe and effect.

It may be ſaid however, that any plan of generally improving the cottages of the poor, or of enabling more of them to keep cows, would evidently give them the power of rearing a

[a] Inquiry into the State of Cottagers in the Counties of Lincoln and Rutland, by Robert Gourlay. Annals of Agriculture, vol. xxxvii. p. 514.

greater

greater number of children, and by thus encouraging population, violate the principles which I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh. But if I have been ſucceſsful in making the reader comprehend the principal bent of this work, he will be aware that the preciſe reaſon why I think that more children ought not to be born than the country can ſupport is, that the greateſt poſſible number of thoſe that are born may be ſupported. We cannot, in the nature of things, aſſiſt the poor in any way, without enabling them to rear up to manhood a greater number of their children. But this is, of all other things, the moſt deſirable, both with regard to individuals and the public. Every loſs of a child from the conſequences of poverty, muſt evidently be preceded and accompanied by great miſery to individuals; and in a public view, every child that dies under ten years of age, is a loſs to the nation of all that had been expended in its ſubſiſtence till that period. Conſequently, in every point of view, a decreaſe of mortality at all ages is what we ought to aim at. We cannot however effect this object, without firſt crowding the population in ſome degree by making more children grow up to manhood; but we ſhall do no harm in this reſpect,

ſpect, if, at the ſame time, we can impreſs theſe children with the idea that to poſſeſs the ſame advantages as their parents, they muſt defer marriage till they have a fair proſpect of being able to maintain a family. And it muſt be candidly confeſſed that if we cannot do this, all our former efforts will have been thrown away. It is not in the nature of things that any permanent and general improvement in the condition of the poor can be effected, without an increaſe in the preventive check; and unleſs this take place, either with or without our efforts, every thing that is done for the poor muſt be temporary and partial: a diminution of mortality at preſent, will be balanced by an increaſed mortality in future; and the improvement of their condition in one place, will proportionally depreſs it in another. This is a truth ſo important and ſo little underſtood, that it can ſcarcely be too often inſiſted on. The generality of charitable people and of the encouragers of marriage, are not in the ſmalleſt degree aware of the real effects of what they do.

Dr. Paley, in a chapter on population, proviſion, &c. in his Moral Philoſophy, obſerves, that the condition moſt favourable to the population of a country, and at the ſame time to its

general happineſs is, " that of a laborious frugal " people miniſtering to the demands of an opu- " lent luxurious nation[a]." Such a form of ſociety has not, it muſt be confeſſed, an inviting aſpect. Nothing but the conviction of its being abſolutely neceſſary, could reconcile us to the idea of ten millions of people condemned to inceſſant toil, and to the privation of every thing but abſolute neceſſaries, in order to miniſter to the exceſſive luxuries of the other million. But the fact is, that ſuch a form of ſociety is by no means neceſſary. It is by no means neceſſary, that the rich ſhould be exceſſively luxurious, in order to ſupport the manufactures of a country, or that the poor ſhould be deprived of all luxuries, in order to make them ſufficiently numerous. The beſt and in every point of view the

[a] Vol. ii. c. xi. p. 359. From a paſſage in Dr. Paley's late work on Natural Theology, I am inclined to think that ſubſequent reflection has induced him to modify ſome of his former ideas on the ſubject of population. He has ſtated moſt juſtly (chap. xxv. p. 539.) that mankind will in every country breed up to a certain point of diſtreſs. If this be allowed, that country will evidently be the happieſt, where the degree of diſtreſs at this point is the leaſt, and conſequently, if the ſpread of luxury by producing the check ſooner, tend to diminiſh this degree of diſtreſs, it is certainly deſirable.

moſt

moſt advantageous manufactures in this country, are thoſe which are conſumed by the great body of the people. The manufactures which are confined excluſively to the rich, are not only trivial on account of the comparative ſmallneſs of their quantity; but are further liable to the great diſadvantage of producing much occaſional miſery among thoſe employed in them, from changes of faſhion. It is the ſpread of luxury therefore among the maſs of the people, and not an exceſs of it in a few, that ſeems to be moſt advantageous, both with regard to national wealth and national happineſs; and what Dr. Paley conſiders as the true evil and proper danger of luxury, I ſhould be diſpoſed to conſider as its true good and peculiar advantage. If indeed, it be allowed that in every ſociety, not in the ſtate of a new colony, ſome powerful check to population muſt prevail; and if it be obſerved that a taſte for the comforts and conveniencies of life will prevent people from marrying under the certainty of being deprived of theſe advantages; it muſt be allowed that we can hardly expect to find any check to marriage ſo little prejudicial to the happineſs and virtue of ſociety as the general prevalence of ſuch a taſte; and

conſequently that the ſpread of luxury[a] in this ſenſe of the term, is particularly deſirable; and one of the beſt means of raiſing that ſtandard of wretchedneſs alluded to in the eighth chapter of this book.

It has been generally found that the middle parts of ſociety are moſt favourable to virtuous and induſtrious habits, and to the growth of all kinds of talents. But it is evident that all cannot be in the middle. Superior and inferior parts are in the nature of things abſolutely neceſſary; and not only neceſſary, but ſtrikingly beneficial. If no man could hope to riſe, or fear to fall in ſociety; if induſtry did not bring with it its reward, and indolence its puniſhment; we could not expect to ſee that animated activity in bettering our condition, which now forms the maſter-ſpring of public proſperity. But in contemplating the different ſtates of Europe, we obſerve a very conſiderable difference

[a] In a note to the tenth chapter of the laſt book, I have mentioned the point at which alone, it is probable that luxury becomes really prejudicial to a country. But this point does not depend upon the ſpread of luxury as diminiſhing the frequency of marriage among the poor, but upon the proportion which thoſe employed in preparing or procuring luxuries, bear to the funds which are to ſupport them.

in

in the relative proportions of the ſuperior, the middle and the inferior parts; and from the effect of theſe differences, it ſeems probable that our beſt grounded expectations of an increaſe in the happineſs of the maſs of human ſociety, are founded in the proſpect of an increaſe in the relative proportions of the middle parts. And if the lower claſſes of people had acquired the habit of proportioning the ſupplies of labour to a ſtationary or even decreaſing demand, without an increaſe of miſery and mortality as at preſent, we might even venture to indulge a hope, that at ſome future period the proceſſes for abridging human labour, the progreſs of which has of late years been ſo rapid, might ultimately ſupply all the wants of the moſt wealthy ſociety with leſs perſonal labour than at preſent; and if they did not diminiſh the ſeverity of individual exertion, might, at leaſt, diminiſh the number of thoſe employed in ſevere toil. If the loweſt claſſes of ſociety were thus diminiſhed, and the middle claſſes increaſed, each labourer might indulge a more rational hope of riſing by diligence and exertion into a better ſtation; the rewards of induſtry and virtue would be increaſed in number; the lottery of human ſociety would appear to conſiſt of fewer blanks and

more prizes; and the ſum of ſocial happineſs would be evidently augmented.

To indulge however in any diſtant views of this kind, unaccompanied by the evils uſually attendant on a ſtationary or decreaſing demand for labour, we muſt ſuppoſe the general prevalence of ſuch prudential habits among the poor, as would prevent them from marrying, when the actual price of labour, joined to what they might have ſaved in their ſingle ſtate, would not give them the proſpect of being able to ſupport a wife and ſix children without aſſiſtance. And in every point of view, ſuch a degree of prudential reſtraint would be extremely beneficial; and would produce a very ſtriking melioration in the condition of the lower claſſes of people.

It may be ſaid perhaps, that even this degree of prudence might not always avail, as when a man marries he cannot tell what number of children he ſhall have, and many have more than ſix. This is certainly true; and in this caſe I do not think that any evil would reſult from making a certain allowance to every child above this number; not with a view of rewarding a man for his large family, but merely, of relieving him from a ſpecies of diſtreſs, which

it

it would be unreaſonable in us to expect that he ſhould calculate upon. And with this view, the relief ſhould be merely ſuch as to place him exactly in the ſame ſituation as if he had had ſix children. Monteſquieu diſapproves of an edict of Lewis the fourteenth, which gave certain penſions to thoſe who had ten and twelve children, as being of no uſe in encouraging population[a]. For the very reaſon that he diſapproves of it, I ſhould think that ſome law of the kind might be adopted without danger, and might relieve particular individuals from a very preſſing and unlooked-for diſtreſs, without operating in any reſpect as an encouragement to marriage.

If at ſome future period, any approach ſhould be made towards the more general prevalence of prudential habits with reſpect to marriage among the poor, from which alone any permanent and general improvement of their condition can ariſe; I do not think that the narroweſt politician need be alarmed at it, from the fear of its occaſioning ſuch an advance in the price of labour as will enable our commercial competitors to underſell us in foreign markets. There are are four circumſtances that might be expected to accompany it, which would probably

[a] Eſprit des Loix, liv. xxiii. c. xxvii.

either prevent or fully counterbalance any effect of this kind. Theſe are, 1ſt, The more equable and lower price of proviſions, from the demand being leſs frequently above the ſupply. 2dly, The removal of that heavy burden on agriculture, and that great addition to the preſent wages of labour, the poors rates. 3dly, The national ſaving of a great part of that ſum which is expended without return, in the ſupport of thoſe children who die prematurely, from the conſequences of poverty. And, laſtly, The more general prevalence of economical and induſtrious habits, particularly among unmarried men, which would prevent that indolence, drunkenneſs, and waſte of labour, which at preſent are too frequently a conſequence of high wages.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Of our rational expectations reſpecting the future improvement of Society.

In taking a general and concluding view of our rational expectations reſpecting the mitigation of the evils ariſing from the principle of population, it may be obſerved, that though the increaſe of population in a geometrical ratio be incontrovertible, and the period of doubling, when unchecked, has been uniformly ſtated in this work, rather below than above the truth; yet there are ſome natural conſequences of the progreſs of ſociety and civilization, which neceſſarily repreſs its full effects. Theſe are, more particularly, great towns and manufactures, in which we can ſcarcely hope, and certainly not expect to ſee any very material change. It is undoubtedly our duty, and in every point of view highly deſirable, to make towns and manufacturing employments as little injurious as poſſible to the duration of human life; but, after all our efforts, it is probable that they will always

always remain leſs healthy than country ſituations and country employments; and conſequently operating as poſitive checks, will diminiſh in ſome degree the neceſſity of the preventive check.

In every old ſtate it is obſerved, that a conſiderable number of grown-up people remain for a time unmarried. The duty of practiſing the common and acknowledged rules of morality during this period, has never been controverted in theory, however it may have been oppoſed in practice. This branch of the duty of moral reſtraint has ſcarcely been touched by the reaſonings of this work. It reſts on the ſame foundation as before, neither ſtronger nor weaker. And knowing how incompletely this duty has hitherto been fulfilled, it would certainly be viſionary to expect any very material change for the better, in future.

The part which has been affected by the reaſonings of this work is not therefore, that which relates to our conduct during the period of celibacy, but to the duty of extending this period till we have a proſpect of being able to maintain our children. And it is by no means viſionary to indulge a hope of ſome favourable change in this reſpect; becauſe it is found by experience,

experience, that the prevalence of this kind of prudential reſtraint is extremely different in different countries, and in the ſame countries at different periods.

It cannot be doubted, that throughout Europe in general, and moſt particularly in the northern ſtates, a decided change has taken place in the operation of this prudential reſtraint, ſince the prevalence of thoſe warlike and enterpriſing habits which deſtroyed ſo many people. In later times the gradual diminution and almoſt total extinction of the plagues which ſo frequently viſited Europe in the ſeventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, produced a change of the ſame kind. And in this country it is not to be doubted that the proportion of marriages has become ſmaller, ſince the improvement of our towns, the leſs frequent returns of epidemics, and the adoption of habits of greater cleanlineſs. During the late ſcarcities it appears that the number of marriages diminiſhed; and the ſame motives which prevented many people from marrying during ſuch a period, would operate preciſely in the ſame way, if, in future, the additional number of children reared to manhood from the introduction of the cow-pox, were to be ſuch as to crowd

crowd all employments, lower the price of labour, and make it more difficult to ſupport a family.

Univerſally, the practice of mankind on the ſubject of marriage has been much ſuperior to their theories; and however frequent may have been the declamations on the duty of entering into this ſtate, and the advantage of early unions to prevent vice, each individual has practically found it neceſſary to conſider of the means of ſupporting a family, before he ventured to take ſo important a ſtep. That great *vis medicatrix reipublicæ*, the deſire of bettering our condition, and the fear of making it worſe, has been conſtantly in action, and has been conſtantly directing people into the right road in ſpite of all the declamations which tended to lead them aſide. Owing to this powerful ſpring of health in every ſtate, which is nothing more than an inference from the general courſe of the laws of nature irreſiſtibly forced on each man's attention, the prudential check to marriage has increaſed in Europe; and it cannot be unreaſonable to conclude that it will ſtill make further advances. If this take place, without any marked and decided increaſe of a vicious intercourſe

tercourſe with the ſex, the happineſs of ſociety will evidently be promoted by it; and with regard to the danger of ſuch increaſe, it is conſolatory to remark, that thoſe countries in Europe where marriages are the leaſt frequent, are by no means particularly diſtinguiſhed by vices of this kind. It has appeared that Norway, Switzerland, England, and Scotland, are above all the reſt in the prevalence of the preventive check; and though I do not mean to inſiſt particularly on the virtuous habits of theſe countries, yet I think that no perſon would ſelect them as the countries moſt marked for profligacy of manners. Indeed, from the little that I know of the continent, I ſhould have been inclined to ſelect them as moſt diſtinguiſhed for contrary habits, and as rather above than below their neighbours in the chaſtity of their women, and conſequently in the virtuous habits of their men. Experience therefore ſeems to teach us, that it is poſſible for moral and phyſical cauſes to counteract the effects that might at firſt be expected from an increaſe of the check to marriage; but allowing all the weight to theſe effects which is in any degree probable, it may be ſafely aſſerted, that the diminution of the vices

ariſing

ariſing from indigence would fully counterbalance them; and that all the advantages of diminiſhed mortality, and ſuperior comforts, which would certainly reſult from an increaſe of the preventive check, may be placed entirely on the ſide of the gains to the cauſe of happineſs and virtue.

It is leſs the object of the preſent work to propoſe new plans of improving ſociety, than to inculcate the neceſſity of reſting contented with that mode of improvement, which is dictated by the courſe of nature, and of not obſtructing the advances which would otherwiſe be made in this way.

It would be undoubtedly highly advantageous that all our poſitive inſtitutions, and the whole tenour of our conduct to the poor, ſhould be ſuch as actively to co-operate with that leſſon of prudence inculcated by the common courſe of human events; and if we take upon ourſelves ſometimes to mitigate the natural puniſhments of imprudence, that we ſhould balance it by increaſing the rewards of an oppoſite conduct. But much would be done, if merely the inſtitutions which directly tend to encourage marriage were gradually changed, and we ceaſed to cir-

culate opinions and inculcate doctrines, which poſitively counteract the leſſons of nature.

The limited good which it is ſometimes in our power to effect, is often loſt by attempting too much, and by making the adoption of ſome particular plan eſſentially neceſſary even to a partial degree of ſucceſs. In the practical application of the reaſonings of this work, I hope that I have avoided this errour. I wiſh to preſs on the recollection of the reader, that, though I may have given ſome new views of old facts, and may have indulged in the contemplation of a conſiderable degree of *poſſible* improvement, that I might not abſolutely ſhut out that prime cheerer hope; yet in my expectations of probable improvement, and in ſuggeſting the means of accompliſhing it, I have been very cautious. The gradual abolition of the poor laws has already often been propoſed, in conſequence of the practical evils which have been found to flow from them, and the danger of their becoming a weight abſolutely intolerable on the landed property of the kingdom. The eſtabliſhment of a more extenſive ſyſtem of national education has neither the advantage of novelty with ſome, nor its diſadvantages with others,

to

to recommend it. The practical good effects of education have long been experienced in Scotland; and almoſt every perſon who has been placed in a ſituation to judge, has given his teſtimony, that education appears to have a conſiderable effect in the prevention of crimes[a], and the promotion of induſtry, morality, and regular conduct. Yet theſe are the only plans which have been offered; and though the adoption of them in the modes ſuggeſted would very powerfully contribute to forward the object of this work, and better the condition of the poor; yet if nothing be done in this way, I ſhall not abſolutely deſpair of ſome partial good effects from the general tenour of the reaſoning.

If the principles which I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh be falſe, I moſt ſincerely hope to ſee

[a] Mr. Howard found fewer priſoners in Switzerland and Scotland, than in other countries, which he attributed to a more regular education among the lower claſſes of the Swiſs and the Scotch. During the number of years which the late Mr. Fielding preſided at Bow-ſtreet, only ſix Scotchmen were brought before him. He uſed to ſay that of the perſons committed the greater part were Iriſh. Preface to vol. iii. of the Reports of the Society for bettering the condition of the poor, p. 32.

them

them completely refuted; but if they be true the ſubject is ſo important, and intereſts the queſtion of human happineſs ſo nearly, that it is impoſſible that they ſhould not in time be more fully known, and more generally circulated, whether any particular efforts be made for the purpoſe or not.

Among the higher and middle claſſes of ſociety, the effect of this knowledge would, I hope, be to direct without relaxing their efforts in bettering the condition of the poor; to ſhow them what they can, and what they cannot do; and that, although much may be done by advice and inſtruction, by encouraging habits of prudence and cleanlineſs, by occaſional and diſcriminate charity, and by any mode of bettering the preſent condition of the poor, which is followed by an increaſe of the preventive check; yet that, without this laſt effect, all the former efforts would be futile; and that, in any old and well-peopled ſtate, to aſſiſt the poor in ſuch a manner as to enable them to marry as early as they pleaſe, and rear up large families, is a phyſical impoſſibility. This knowledge, by tending to prevent the rich from deſtroying the good effects of their own exertions, and waſting their efforts in a direction where ſucceſs is un-

attainable, would confine their attention to the proper objects, and thus enable them to do more good.

Among the poor themſelves, its effects would be ſtill more important. That the principal and moſt permanent cauſe of poverty, has little or no direct relation to forms of government, or the unequal diviſion of property; and that, as the rich do not in reality poſſeſs the power of finding employment and maintenance for the poor, the poor cannot, in the nature of things, poſſeſs the right to demand them, are important truths flowing from the principle of population, which, when properly explained, would by no means be above the moſt ordinary comprehenſions. And it is evident, that every man in the lower claſſes of ſociety, who became acquainted with theſe truths, would be diſpoſed to bear the diſtreſſes in which he might be involved with more patience, would feel leſs diſcontent and irritation at the government and the higher claſſes of ſociety on account of his poverty, would be on all occaſions leſs diſpoſed to inſubordination and turbulence; and if he received aſſiſtance, either from any public inſtitution, or from the hand of private charity, he

he would receive it with more thankfulneſs, and more juſtly appreciate its value.

If theſe truths were by degrees more generally known, which in the courſe of time does not ſeem to be improbable from the natural effects of the mutual interchange of opinions, the lower claſſes of people, as a body, would become more peaceable and orderly, would be leſs inclined to tumultuous proceedings in ſeaſons of ſcarcity, and would at all times be leſs influenced by inflammatory and ſeditious publications, from knowing how little the price of labour and the means of ſupporting a family depend upon a revolution. The mere knowledge of theſe truths, even if they did not operate ſufficiently to produce any marked change in the prudential habits of the poor, with regard to marriage, would ſtill have a moſt beneficial effect on their conduct in a political light; and undoubtedly one of the moſt valuable of theſe effects would be, the power that would reſult to the higher and middle claſſes of ſociety of gradually improving their governments[a], without the

[a] I cannot believe that the removal of all unjuſt grounds of diſcontent againſt conſtituted authorities would render the people torpid and indifferent to advantages which are really

the apprehenſion of thoſe revolutionary exceſſes, the fear of which, at preſent, threatens to deprive Europe even of that degree of liberty which ſhe had before experienced to be practicable, and the ſalutary effects of which ſhe had long enjoyed.

From a review of the ſtate of ſociety in former periods, compared with the preſent, I ſhould certainly ſay, that the evils reſulting from the principle of population have rather diminiſhed than increaſed, even under the diſadvantage of an almoſt total ignorance of their real cauſe. And if we can indulge the hope that this ignorance will be gradually diſſipated, it does not ſeem unreaſonable to expect that they will be ſtill further diminiſhed. The increaſe of abſolute population which will of courſe take place, will evidently tend but little to weaken this expectation, as every thing depends upon the relative proportions between

attainable. The bleſſings of civil liberty are ſo great, that they ſurely cannot need the aid of falſe colouring to make them deſirable. I ſhould be ſorry to think that the lower claſſes of people could never be animated to aſſert their rights but by means of ſuch illuſory promiſes, as will generally make the remedy of reſiſtance much worſe than the diſeaſe that it was intended to cure.

population

population and food, and not on the abſolute number of people. In the former part of this work it appeared, that the countries which poſſeſſed the feweſt people, often ſuffered the moſt from the effects of the principle of population; and it can ſcarcely be doubted, that, taking Europe throughout, fewer famines and fewer diſeaſes ariſing from want have prevailed in the laſt century, than thoſe which preceded it.

On the whole therefore, though our future proſpects reſpecting the mitigation of the evils ariſing from the principle of population, may not be ſo bright as we could wiſh, yet they are far from being entirely diſheartening, and by no means preclude that gradual and progreſſive improvement in human ſociety, which before the late wild ſpeculations on the ſubject, was the object of rational expectation. To the laws of property and marriage, and to the apparently narrow principle of ſelf-love which prompts each individual to exert himſelf in bettering his condition, we are indebted for all the nobleſt exertions of human genius, for every thing that diſtinguiſhes the civilized from the ſavage ſtate. A ſtrict inquiry into the principle of population obliges us to conclude, that we ſhall never be able to throw down the ladder by which we

have riſen to this eminence; but it by no means proves that we may not riſe higher by the ſame means. The ſtructure of ſociety, in its great features, will probably always remain unchanged. We have every reaſon to believe, that it will always conſiſt of a claſs of proprietors, and a claſs of labourers; but the condition of each, and the proportion which they bear to each other, may be ſo altered as greatly to improve the harmony and beauty of the whole. It would indeed be a melancholy reflection, that while the views of phyſical ſcience are daily enlarging, ſo as ſcarcely to be bounded by the moſt diſtant horizon, the ſcience of moral and political philoſophy ſhould be confined within ſuch narrow limits, or at beſt be ſo feeble in its influence, as to be unable to counteract the obſtacles to human happineſs ariſing from a ſingle cauſe. But however formidable theſe obſtacles may have appeared in ſome parts of this work, it is hoped that the general reſult of the inquiry is ſuch, as not to make us give up the improvement of human ſociety in deſpair. The partial good which ſeems to be attainable is worthy of all our exertions; is ſufficient to direct our efforts and animate our proſpects. And although we cannot expect that the virtue and

happineſs of mankind will keep pace with the brilliant career of phyſical diſcovery, yet if we are not wanting to ourſelves, we may confidently indulge the hope that, to no unimportant extent, they will be influenced by its progreſs, and will partake in its ſucceſs.

APPENDIX.

In the preface to the laſt edition of this Eſſay, I expreſſed a hope, that the detailed manner in which I had treated the ſubject, and purſued it to its conſequences, though it might open the door to many objections, and expoſe me to much ſeverity of criticiſm, might be ſubſervient to the important end of bringing a ſubject ſo nearly connected with the happineſs of ſociety into more general notice. Conformably to the ſame views I ſhould always have felt willing to enter into the diſcuſſion of any ſerious objections that were made to my principles or concluſions, to abandon thoſe which appeared to be falſe, and to throw further lights, if I could, on thoſe which appeared to be true. But though the work has excited a degree of public attention much greater than I could have preſumed to expect, yet very little has been written to controvert it; and of that little, the greateſt part is ſo full of illiberal declamation, and ſo entirely deſtitute of argument, as to be evidently beneath notice. What I have to ſay therefore at preſent, will be directed rather more to the objections which have been urged in converſation, than to thoſe which have appeared in print.

print. My object is to correct ſome of the miſrepreſentations which have gone abroad reſpecting two or three of the moſt important points of the Eſſay; and I ſhould feel greatly obliged to thoſe who have not had leiſure to read the whole work, if they would caſt their eyes over the few following pages, that they may not, from the partial and incorrect ſtatements which they have heard, miſtake the import of ſome of my opinions, and attribute to me others which I have never held.

The firſt grand objection that has been made to my principles is, that they contradict the original command of the Creator, to increaſe and multiply and repleniſh the earth. But thoſe who have urged this objection have certainly either not read the work, or have directed their attention ſolely to a few detached paſſages, and have been unable to ſeize the bent and ſpirit of the whole. I am fully of opinion, that it is the duty of man to obey this command of his Creator, nor is there in my recollection a ſingle paſſage in the work, which, taken with the context, can, to any reader of intelligence, warrant the contrary inference.

Every expreſs command given to man by his Creator is given in ſubordination to thoſe great and uniform laws of nature which he had previouſly eſtabliſhed; and we are forbidden both by reaſon and religion to expect that theſe laws will be changed in order to enable us to execute more readily

readily any particular precept. It is undoubtedly true, that if man were enabled miraculouſly to live without food, the earth would be very rapidly repleniſhed; but as we have not the ſlighteſt ground of hope that ſuch a miracle will be worked for this purpoſe, it becomes our poſitive duty as reaſonable creatures, and with a view of executing the commands of our Creator, to inquire into the laws which he has eſtabliſhed for the multiplication of the ſpecies. And when we find not only from the ſpeculative contemplation of theſe laws, but from the far more powerful and imperious ſuggeſtions of our ſenſes, that man cannot live without food, it is a folly exactly of the ſame *kind* to attempt to obey the will of our Creator by increaſing population without reference to the means of its ſupport, as to attempt to obtain an abundant crop of corn by ſowing it on the way ſide and in hedges, where it cannot receive its proper nouriſhment. Which is it, I would aſk, that beſt ſeconds the benevolent intentions of the Creator in covering the earth with eſculent vegetables, he who with care and foreſight duly ploughs and prepares a piece of ground, and ſows no more ſeed than he expects will grow up to maturity, or he who ſcatters a profuſion of ſeed indifferently over the land, without reference to the ſoil on which it falls, or any previous preparation for its reception?

It is an utter miſconception of my argument to infer

infer that I am an enemy to population. I am only an enemy to vice and misery, and consequently to that unfavourable proportion between population and food which produces these evils. But this unfavourable proportion has no necessary connection with the quantity of absolute population which a country may contain. On the contrary, it is more frequently found in countries which are very thinly peopled, than in those which are populous.

The bent of my argument on the subject of population may be illustrated by the instance of a pasture farm. If a young grazier were told to stock his land well, as on his stock would depend his profits, and the ultimate success of his undertaking, he would certainly have been told nothing but what was strictly true. And he would have to accuse himself, not his advisers, if in pursuance of these instructions he were to push the breeding of his cattle till they became lean and half-starved. His instructor, when he talked of the advantages of a large stock, meant undoubtedly stock in proper condition, and not such a stock, as though it might be numerically greater was in value much less. The expression of stocking a farm well does not refer to particular numbers, but merely to that proportion which is best adapted to the farm, whether it be a poor or a rich one, whether it will carry fifty head of cattle or five hundred. It is undoubtedly extremely desirable that it should carry the greater

greater number, and every effort ſhould be made to effect this object; but ſurely that farmer could not be conſidered as an enemy to a large quantity of ſtock, who ſhould inſiſt upon the folly and impropriety of attempting to breed ſuch a quantity, before the land was put into a condition to bear it.

The arguments which I have uſed reſpecting the increaſe of population are exactly of the ſame nature as theſe juſt mentioned. I believe that it is the intention of the Creator that the earth ſhould be repleniſhed[a]; but certainly with a healthy, virtuous, and happy population, not an unhealthy, vicious, and miſerable one. And if in endeavouring to obey the command to increaſe and multiply, we people it only with beings of this latter deſcription, and ſuffer accordingly, we have no right to impeach the juſtice of the command, but our irrational mode of executing it.

In the deſireableneſs of a great and efficient population, I do not differ from the warmeſt advocates of increaſe. I am perfectly ready to acknowledge with the writers of old, that it is not extent of territory but extent of population that meaſures the power of ſtates. It is only as to the mode of obtaining a vigorous and efficient population that I differ from them; and in thus differing I conceive myſelf entirely borne out by experience, that great teſt of all human ſpeculations.

[a] This opinion I have expreſſed, pag. 491 of the 4to. edit. and p. 315, vol. ii. 8vo. edit.

It

It appears from the undoubted teſtimony of regiſters, that a large proportion of marriages and births is by no means neceſſarily connected with a rapid increaſe of population, but is often found in countries where it is either ſtationary or increaſing very ſlowly. The population of ſuch countries is not only comparatively inefficient from the general poverty and miſery of the inhabitants, but invariably contains a much larger proportion of perſons in thoſe ſtages of life in which they are unable to contribute their ſhare to the reſources, or the defence of the ſtate.

This is moſt ſtrikingly illuſtrated in an inſtance which I have quoted from M. Muret, in a chapter on Switzerland, where it appeared that in proportion to the ſame population, the Lyonois produced 16 births, the Pays de Vaud 11, and a particular pariſh in the Alps only 8; but that at the age of 20 theſe three very different numbers were all reduced to the ſame [a]. In the Lyonois nearly half of the population was under the age of puberty, in the Pays de Vaud one third, and in the pariſh of the Alps only one fourth. The inference from ſuch facts is unavoidable, and of the higheſt importance to ſociety.

The power of a country to increaſe its reſources, or defend its poſſeſſions, muſt depend principally upon its efficient population, upon that part of the

[a] pag. 271, 4to. edit. and p. 399, vol. i. 8vo. edit.

population

population which is of an age to be employed effectually in agriculture, commerce, or war; but it appears with an evidence little ſhort of demonſtration, that in a country the reſources of which do not naturally call for a larger proportion of births, ſuch an increaſe, ſo far from tending to increaſe this efficient population, would tend materially to diminiſh it. It would undoubtedly at firſt increaſe the number of ſouls in proportion to the means of ſubſiſtence, and conſequently cruelly increaſe the preſſure of want; but the number of perſons riſing annually to the age of puberty might not be ſo great as before, a larger part of the produce would be diſtributed without return to children who would never reach manhood; and the additional population inſtead of giving additional ſtrength to the country would eſſentially leſſen this ſtrength, and operate as a conſtant obſtacle to the creation of new reſources.

We are a little dazzled at preſent by the population and power of France, and it is known that ſhe has always had a large proportion of births: but if any reliance can be placed on what are conſidered as the beſt authorities on this ſubject, it is quite certain, that the advantages which ſhe enjoys do not ariſe from any thing peculiar in the ſtructure of her population; but ſolely from the great abſolute quantity of it, derived from her immenſe extent of fertile territory.

The

The effective population in this country, compared with the whole, is conſiderably greater than in France; and England not only can, but does employ a larger proportion of her population in augmenting and defending her reſources, than her great rival. According to the *Statiſtique générale et particuliere de la France* lately publiſhed, the poportion of the population under twenty is almoſt $\frac{9}{20}$; in England it is probably not much more than $\frac{7}{20}$. Conſequently out of a population of ten millions England would have a million more of perſons above twenty than France, and would at leaſt have three or four hundred thouſand more males of a military age. If our population were of the ſame deſcription as that of France, it muſt be increaſed numerically by more than a million and a half in order to enable us to produce from England and Wales the ſame number of perſons above the age of twenty as at preſent; and if we had only an increaſe of a million, our efficient ſtrength in agriculture, commerce, and war, would be in the moſt decided manner diminiſhed, while at the ſame time the diſtreſſes of the lower claſſes would be dreadfully increaſed. Can any rational man ſay that an additional population of this deſcription would be deſirable either in a moral or political view. And yet this is the kind of population which invariably reſults from direct encouragements to marriage, or from that want of perſonal reſpectability which is occaſioned by ignorance and deſpotiſm.

It

It may perhaps be true that France fills her armies with greater facility and leſs interruption to the uſual labours of her inhabitants than England; and it muſt be acknowledged that poverty and want of employment are powerful aids to a recruiting ſerjeant; but it would not be a very humane project, to keep our people always in want, for the ſake of enliſting them cheaper, nor would it be a very politic project, to diminiſh our wealth and ſtrength with the ſame economical view. We cannot attain incompatible objects; if we poſſeſs the advantage of being able to keep nearly all our people conſtantly employed either in agriculture or commerce, we cannot expect to retain the oppoſite advantage of their being always at leiſure, and willing to enliſt for a very ſmall ſum[a]. But we may reſt perfectly aſſured, that while we have the efficient population, we ſhall never want men to fill our armies if we propoſe to them adequate motives.

In many parts of the Eſſay I have dwelt much on the advantage of rearing the requiſite population of any country from the ſmalleſt number of births. I have ſtated expreſsly, that a decreaſe of mortality at all ages is what we ought chiefly to aim at; and as the beſt criterion of happineſs and

[a] This ſubject is ſtrikingly illuſtrated in Lord Selkirk's lucid and maſterly obſervations on the preſent ſtate of the Highlands, and on the cauſes and probable conſequences of emigration, to which I can with confidence refer the reader.

good government, inſtead of the largeneſs of the proportion of births, which was the uſual mode of judging, I have propoſed the ſmallneſs of the proportion dying under the age of puberty. Conſcious that I had never intentionally deviated from theſe principles, I might well be rather ſurpriſed to hear that I had been conſidered by ſome as an enemy to the introduction of the vaccine inoculation, which is calculated to attain the very end which I have uniformly conſidered as ſo deſirable. I have indeed intimated what I ſtill continue moſt firmly to believe, that if the reſources of the country would not permanently admit of a greatly accelerated rate of increaſe in the population (and whether they would or not, muſt certainly depend upon other cauſes beſides the number of lives ſaved by the vaccine inoculation[a]), one of two things would happen, either an increaſed mortality of ſome other diſeaſes, or a diminution in the proportion of births. But I have expreſſed my conviction that the latter effect would take place; and therefore conſiſtently with the opinions which I have always maintained, I ought to be, and am, one of the warmeſt friends to the introduction of the cow-pox. In making

[a] It ſhould be remarked however, that a young perſon ſaved from death is more likely to contribute to the creation of freſh reſources than another birth. It is a great loſs of labour and food to begin over again. And univerſally it is true, that under ſimilar circumſtances, that article will come the cheapeſt to market which is accompanied by feweſt failures.

every exertion, which I think likely to be effectual, to increaſe the comforts and diminiſh the mortality among the poor, I act in the moſt exact conformity to my principles. Whether thoſe are equally conſiſtent, who profeſs to have the ſame object in view, and yet meaſure the happineſs of nations by the large proportion of marriages and births, is a point which they would do well to conſider.

It has been ſaid by ſome, that the natural checks to population will always be ſufficient to keep it within bounds, without reſorting to any other aids; and one ingenious writer has remarked that I have not deduced a ſingle original fact from real obſervations to prove the inefficiency of the checks which already prevail*. Theſe remarks are correctly true, and are truiſms exactly of the ſame kind as the aſſertion that man cannot live without food. For undoubtedly as long as this continues to be a law of his nature, what are here called the natural checks cannot poſſibly fail of being effectual. Beſides the curious truiſm that theſe aſſertions involve, they proceed upon the very ſtrange ſuppoſition that the *ultimate* object of my work is to check population, as if any thing could be more deſirable than the moſt rapid increaſe of population unaccompanied by vice and miſery. But of courſe my ulti-

* I ſhould like much to know what deſcription of facts this gentleman had in view when he made this obſervation. If I could have found one of the kind which ſeems here to be alluded to, it would indeed have been truly original.

mate object is to diminiſh vice and miſery, and any checks to population which may have been ſuggeſted, are ſolely as means to accompliſh this end. To a rational being, the prudential check to population ought to be conſidered as equally natural with the check from poverty and premature mortality, which theſe gentlemen ſeem to think ſo entirely ſufficient and ſatisfactory; and it will readily occur to the intelligent reader, that one claſs of checks may be ſubſtituted for another, not only without eſſentially diminiſhing the population of a country, but even under a conſtantly progreſſive increaſe of it [a].

On the poſſibility of increaſing very conſiderably the effective population of this country, I have expreſſed myſelf in ſome parts of my work more ſanguinely, perhaps, than experience would warrant. I have ſaid that in the courſe of ſome centuries it might contain two or three times as many inhabitants as at preſent, and yet every perſon be both better fed and better clothed [b]. And in the compariſon of the increaſe of population and food at the beginning of the Eſſay, that the argument might not ſeem to depend upon a difference of opinion reſpecting facts, I have allowed the pro-

[a] Both Norway and Switzerland, where the preventive check prevails the moſt, are increaſing with ſome rapidity in their population; and in proportion to their means of ſubſiſtence, they can produce more males of a military age than any other country of Europe.

[b] p. 512, 4to. edit. p. 350, vol. ii. 8vo. edit.

duce

duce of the earth to be unlimited, which is certainly going too far. It is not a little curious therefore, that it ſhould ſtill continue to be urged againſt me as an argument, that this country might contain two or three times as many inhabitants; and it is ſtill more curious, that ſome perſons who have allowed the different ratios of increaſe on which all my principal concluſions are founded, have ſtill aſſerted that no difficulty or diſtreſs could ariſe from population, till the productions of the earth could not be further increaſed. I doubt whether a ſtronger inſtance could readily be produced of the total abſence of the power of reaſoning, than this aſſertion, after ſuch a conceſſion, affords. It involves a greater abſurdity than the ſaying, that becauſe a farm can by proper management be made to carry an additional ſtock of four head of cattle every year, that therefore no difficulty or inconvenience would ariſe if an additional forty were placed in it yearly.

The power of the earth to produce ſubſiſtence is certainly not unlimited, but it is ſtrictly ſpeaking indefinite, that is, its limits are not defined, and the time will probably never arrive when we ſhall be able to ſay, that no farther labour or ingenuity of man could make further additions to it. But the power of obtaining an additional quantity of food from the earth by proper management, and in a certain time, has the moſt remote relation imagin-

able to the power of keeping pace with an unreſtricted increaſe of population. The knowledge and induſtry which would enable the natives of New Holland to make the beſt uſe of the natural reſources of their country, muſt, without an abſolute miracle, come to them gradually and ſlowly; and even then, as it has amply appeared, would be perfectly ineffectual as to the grand object; but the paſſions which prompt to the increaſe of population are always in full vigour, and are ready to produce their full effect even in a ſtate of the moſt helpleſs ignorance and barbariſm. It will be readily allowed, that the reaſon why New Holland, in proportion to its natural powers, is not ſo populous as China, is the want of thoſe human inſtitutions which protect property and encourage induſtry; but the miſery and vice which prevail almoſt equally in both countries from the tendency of population to increaſe faſter than the means of ſubſiſtence, form a diſtinct conſideration, and ariſe from a diſtinct cauſe. They ariſe from the incomplete diſcipline of the human paſſions; and no perſon with the ſlighteſt knowledge of mankind has ever had the hardihood to affirm, that human inſtitutions could completely diſcipline all the human paſſions. But I have already treated this ſubject ſo fully in the courſe of the work that I am aſhamed to add any thing further here.

The next grand objection which has been urged againſt

againſt me, is my denial of the *right* of the poor to ſupport.

Thoſe who would maintain this objection with any degree of conſiſtency are bound to ſhow that the different ratios of increaſe with reſpect to population and food, which I attempted to eſtabliſh at the beginning of the Eſſay, are fundamentally erroneous; as on the ſuppoſition of their being true, the concluſion is inevitable. If it appear, as it muſt appear on theſe ratios being allowed, that it is not poſſible for the induſtry of man to produce ſufficient food for all that would be born, if every perſon were to marry at the time when he was firſt prompted to it by inclination, it follows irreſiſtibly that all cannot have a *right* to ſupport. Let us for a moment ſuppoſe an equal diviſion of property in any country. If under theſe circumſtances one half of the ſociety were by prudential habits ſo to regulate their increaſe, that it exactly kept pace with their increaſing cultivation, it is evident that they would always remain as rich as at firſt. If the other half during the ſame time married at the age of puberty, when they would probably feel moſt inclined to it, it is as evident that they would ſoon become wretchedly poor. But upon what plea of juſtice or equity could this ſecond half of the ſociety claim a right, in virtue of their poverty, to any of the poſſeſſions of the firſt half. This poverty had ariſen entirely from their own ignorance

or imprudence; and it would be perfectly clear from the manner in which it had come upon them, that if their plea were admitted, and they were not ſuffered to feel the particular evils reſulting from their conduct, the whole ſociety would ſhortly be involved in the ſame degree of wretchedneſs. Any voluntary and temporary aſſiſtance which might be given as a meaſure of charity by the richer members of the ſociety to the others, while they were learning to make a better uſe of the leſſons of nature, would be quite a diſtinct conſideration, and without doubt moſt properly applied; but nothing like a claim of *right* to ſupport can poſſibly be maintained till we deny the premiſes; till we affirm that the American increaſe of population is a miracle, and does not ariſe from the greater facility of obtaining the means of ſubſiſtence[a].

[a] It has been ſaid that I have written a quarto volume to prove that population increaſes in a geometrical, and food in an arithmetical ratio; but this is not quite true. The firſt of theſe propoſitions I conſidered as proved the moment that the American increaſe was related, and the ſecond propoſition as ſoon as it was enunciated. The chief object of my work was to inquire what effects theſe laws, which I conſidered as eſtabliſhed in the firſt ſix pages had produced, and were likely to produce on ſociety; a ſubject not very readily exhauſted. The principal fault of my details is, that they are not ſufficiently particular; but this was a fault which it was not in my power to remedy. It would be a moſt curious, and to every philoſophical mind a moſt intereſting piece of information, to know the exact ſhare of the full power of increaſe which each exiſting check prevents; but at preſent I ſee no mode of obtaining ſuch information.

In

In fact whatever we may say in our declamations on this subject, almost the whole of our *conduct* is founded on the non-existence of this right. If the poor had really a claim of *right* to support, I do not think that any man could justify his wearing broad cloth, or eating as much meat as he likes for dinner, and those who assert this right, and yet are rolling in their carriages, living every day luxuriously, and keeping even their horses on food of which their fellow creatures are in want, must be allowed to act with the greatest inconsistency. Taking an individual instance without reference to consequences, it appears to me that Mr. Godwin's argument is irresistible. Can it be pretended for a moment that a part of the mutton which I expect to eat to day would not be much more beneficially employed on some hard-working labourer who has not perhaps tasted animal food for the last week, or on some poor family who cannot command sufficient food of any kind fully to satisfy the cravings of appetite. If these instances were not of a nature to multiply in proportion as such wants were indiscriminately gratified, the gratification of them, as it would be practicable, would be highly beneficial; and in this case I should not have the smallest hesitation in most fully allowing the right. But as it appears clearly both from theory and experience, that if the claim were allowed it would soon increase beyond the *possibility* of satisfying it, and that

that the practical attempt to do ſo, would involve the human race in the moſt wretched and univerſal poverty, it follows neceſſarily that our conduct, which denies the right, is more ſuited to the preſent ſtate of our being, than our declamations which allow it.

The great author of nature, indeed, with that wiſdom which is apparent in all his works, has not left this concluſion to the cold and ſpeculative conſideration of general conſequences. By making the paſſion of ſelf-love beyond compariſon ſtronger than the paſſion of benevolence, he has at once impelled us to that line of conduct which is eſſential to the preſervation of the human race. If all that might be born could be adequately ſupplied, we cannot doubt that he would have made the deſire of giving to others as ardent as that of ſupplying ourſelves. But as under the preſent conſtitution of things this is not ſo, he has enjoined every man to purſue, as his primary object, his own ſafety and happineſs, and the ſafety and happineſs of thoſe immediately connected with him; and it is highly inſtructive to obſerve, that in proportion as the ſphere contracts, and the power of giving effectual aſſiſtance increaſes, the deſire increaſes at the ſame time. In the caſe of children who have certainly a claim of *right* to the ſupport and protection of their parents, we generally find parental affection nearly as ſtrong as ſelf-love; and except in a few anoma-

lous

lous caſes, the laſt morſel will be divided into equal ſhares.

By this wiſe proviſion the moſt ignorant are led to promote the general happineſs, an end which they would have totally failed to attain if the moving principle of their conduct had been benevolence[a]. Benevolence indeed, as the great and conſtant ſource of action, would require the moſt perfect knowledge of cauſes and effects, and therefore can only be the attribute of the Deity. In a being ſo ſhort-ſighted as man, it would lead into the groſſeſt errours, and ſoon transform the fair and cultivated ſoil of civilized ſociety into a dreary ſcene of want and confuſion.

But though benevolence cannot in the preſent ſtate of our being be the great moving principle of human actions, yet as the kind corrector of the evils ariſing from the other ſtronger paſſion, it is eſſential to human happineſs, it is the balm and conſolation and grace of human life, the ſource of our nobleſt efforts in the cauſe of virtue, and of our pureſt and moſt refined pleaſures. Conformably to that ſyſtem of general laws, according to which the Supreme Being appears with very few exceptions to act, a paſſion ſo ſtrong and general as ſelf-love could not prevail without producing much partial

[a] In ſaying this let me not be ſuppoſed to give the ſlighteſt ſanction to the ſyſtem of morals inculcated in the *Fable of the Bees*, a ſyſtem which I conſider as abſolutely falſe, and directly contrary to the juſt definition of virtue. The great art of Dr. Mandeville conſiſted in miſnomers.

evil;

evil; and to prevent this paſſion from degenerating into the odious vice of ſelfiſhneſs[a], to make us ſympathiſe in the pains and pleaſures of our fellow-creatures, and feel the ſame *kind* of intereſt in their happineſs and miſery as in our own, though diminiſhed in degree, to prompt us often to put ourſelves in their place, that we may underſtand their wants, acknowledge their rights, and do them good as we have opportunity; and to remind us continually, that even the paſſion which urges us to procure plenty for ourſelves was not implanted in us for our own excluſive advantage, but as the means of procuring the greateſt plenty for all; theſe appear to be the objects and offices of benevolence. In every ſituation of life there is ample room for the exerciſe of this virtue; and as each individual riſes in ſociety, as he advances in knowledge and excellence, as his power of benefiting others becomes greater, and the neceſſary attention to his own wants leſs, it will naturally come in for an increaſing ſhare among his conſtant motives of action. In ſituations of high truſt and influence it ought to have a very large ſhare, and in all public inſtitutions be the great moving principle. Though

[a] It ſeems proper to make a decided diſtinction between ſelf-love and ſelfiſhneſs, between that paſſion which under proper regulations is the ſource of all honourable induſtry, and of all the neceſſaries and conveniencies of life, and the ſame paſſion puſhed to exceſs, when it becomes uſeleſs and diſguſting, and conſequently vicious.

we

we have often reaſon to fear that our benevolence may not take the moſt beneficial direction, we need never apprehend that there will be too much of it in ſociety. The foundations of that paſſion on which our preſervation depends, are fixed ſo deeply in our nature, that no reaſonings or addreſſes to our feelings can eſſentially diſturb it. It is juſt therefore, and proper that all the poſitive precepts ſhould be on the ſide of the weaker impulſe; and we may ſafely endeavour to increaſe and extend its influence as much as we are able, if at the ſame time we are conſtantly on the watch to prevent the evil which may ariſe from its miſapplication.

The law which in this country entitles the poor to relief is undoubtedly different from a full acknowledgment of the natural right; and from this difference and the many counteracting cauſes that ariſe from the mode of its execution, it will not of courſe be attended with the ſame conſequences. But ſtill it is an approximation to a full acknowledgment, and as ſuch appears to produce much evil, both with regard to the habits and the temper of the poor. I have in conſequence ventured to ſuggeſt a plan of gradual abolition. which, as might be expected, has not met with univerſal approbation. I can readily underſtand any objections that may be made to it, on the plea that the right having been once acknowledged in this country, the revocation of it might at firſt excite diſcontents;

diſcontents; and ſhould therefore moſt fully concur in the propriety of proceeding with the greateſt caution, and of uſing all poſſible means of preventing any ſudden ſhock to the opinions of the poor. But I have never been able to comprehend the grounds of the further aſſertion which I have ſometimes heard made, that if the poor were really convinced that they had no claim of right to relief, they would in general be more inclined to be diſcontented and ſeditious. On theſe occaſions the only way I have of judging is to put myſelf in imagination in the place of the poor man, and conſider how I ſhould feel in his ſituation. If I were told that the rich by the laws of nature and the laws of the land were bound to ſupport me, I could not, in the firſt place, feel much obligation for ſuch ſupport; and in the next place if I were given any food of an inferior kind, and could not ſee the abſolute neceſſity of the change, which would probably be the caſe, I ſhould think that I had good reaſon to complain. I ſhould feel that the laws had been violated to my injury, and that I had been unjuſtly deprived of my right. Under theſe circumſtances, though I might be deterred by the fear of an armed force from committing any overt acts of reſiſtance, yet I ſhould conſider myſelf as perfectly juſtified in ſo doing, if this fear were removed, and the injury which I believed that I had ſuffered might produce the moſt unfavourable effects

effects on my general diſpoſitions towards the higher claſſes of ſociety. I cannot indeed conceive any thing more irritating to the human feelings, than to experience that degree of diſtreſs which, in ſpite of all our poor laws and benevolence, is not unfrequently felt in this country; and yet to believe that theſe ſufferings were not brought upon me either by my own faults, or by the operation of thoſe general laws, which like the tempeſt, the blight, or the peſtilence, are continually falling hard on particular individuals, while others entirely eſcape, but were occaſioned ſolely by the avarice and injuſtice of the higher claſſes of ſociety.

On the contrary, if I firmly believed that by the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, I had no claim of *right* to ſupport, I ſhould, in the firſt place, feel myſelf more ſtrongly bound to a life of induſtry and frugality; but if want, notwithſtanding, came upon me, I ſhould conſider it in the light of ſickneſs, as an evil incidental to my preſent ſtate of being, and which, if I could not avoid, it was my duty to bear with fortitude and reſignation. I ſhould know from paſt experience, that the beſt title I could have to the aſſiſtance of the benevolent would be the not having brought myſelf into diſtreſs by my own idleneſs or extravagance. What I received would have the beſt effect on my feelings towards the higher claſſes. Even if it were much inferior to what I had been accuſtomed to, it would ſtill, inſtead

ſtead of an injury, be an obligation; and conſcious that I had no claim of *right*, nothing but the fear of abſolute famine, which would overcome all other conſiderations, could morally juſtify reſiſtance.

I cannot help believing that if the poor in this country were convinced that they had no claim of *right* to ſupport; and yet in ſcarcities and all caſes of urgent diſtreſs, were liberally relieved, which I think they would be, the bond which unites the rich with the poor would be drawn much cloſer than at preſent, and the lower claſſes of ſociety, as they would have leſs real reaſon for irritation, and diſcontent, would be much leſs ſubject to theſe uneaſy ſenſations.

Among thoſe who have objected to my declaration that the poor have no claim of *right* to ſupport is Mr. Young, who, with a harſhneſs not quite becoming a candid inquirer after truth, has called my propoſal for the gradual abolition of the poor laws a horrible plan, and aſſerted that the execution of it would be a moſt iniquitous proceeding. Let this plan however be compared for a moment with that which he himſelf and others have propoſed, of fixing the ſum of the poors rates, which on no account is to be increaſed. Under ſuch a law, if the diſtreſſes of the poor were to be aggravated tenfold, either by the increaſe of numbers or the recurrence of a ſcarcity, the ſame ſum would invariably be appropriated to their relief. If the ſtatute

ſtatute which gives the poor a right to ſupport were to remain unexpunged, we ſhould add to the cruelty of ſtarving them, the extreme injuſtice of ſtill *profeſſing* to relieve them. If this ſtatute were expunged or altered we ſhould virtually deny the right of the poor to ſupport, and only retain the abſurdity of ſaying that they had a right to a certain ſum; an abſurdity on which Mr. Young juſtly comments with much ſeverity in the caſe of France[a]. In both caſes the hardſhips which they would ſuffer would be much more ſevere, and would come upon them in a much more unprepared ſtate, than upon the plan propoſed in the Eſſay.

[a] The National Aſſembly of France, though they diſapproved of the Engliſh poor laws, ſtill adopted their principle, and declared that the poor had a right to pecuniary aſſiſtance; that the Aſſembly ought to conſider ſuch a proviſion as one of its firſt and moſt ſacred duties; and that with this view, an expence ought to be incurred to the amount of 50 millions a year. Mr. Young juſtly obſerves, that he does not comprehend how it is poſſible to regard the expenditure of 50 millions a ſacred duty, and not extend that 50 to 100 if neceſſity ſhould demand it, the 100 to 200, the 200 to 300, and ſo on in the ſame miſerable progreſſion which has taken place in England. Travels in France, c. xv. p. 439.

I ſhould be the laſt man to quote Mr. Young againſt himſelf, if I thought he had left the path of error for the path of truth, as ſuch kind of inconſiſtency I hold to be highly praiſeworthy. But thinking on the contrary that he has left truth for error, it is ſurely juſtifiable to remind him of his former opinions. We may recal to a vicious man his former virtuous conduct, though it would be uſeleſs and indelicate to remind a virtuous man of the vices which he had relinquiſhed.

According to this plan all that are already married, and even all that are engaged to marry during the courſe of the year, and all their children would be relieved as uſual; and only thoſe who marry ſubſequently, and who of courſe may be ſuppoſed to have made better proviſion for contingencies would be out of the pale of relief.

Any plan for the abolition of the poor laws muſt preſuppoſe a general acknowledgment that they are eſſentially wrong, and that it is neceſſary to tread back our ſteps. With this acknowledgment, whatever objections may be made to my plan, in the too frequently ſhort-ſighted views of policy, I have no fear of comparing it with any other that has yet been advanced, in point of juſtice and humanity; and of courſe the terms iniquitous and horrible "paſs by me like the idle wind which I regard "not."

Mr. Young it would appear has now given up this plan. He has pleaded for the privilege of being inconſiſtent, and has given ſuch reaſons for it that I am diſpoſed to acquieſce in them, provided he confines the exerciſe of this privilege to different publications, in the interval between which, he may have collected new facts; but I ſtill think it not quite allowable in the ſame publication; and yet it appears that in the very paper in which he has ſo ſeverely condemned my ſcheme, the ſame arguments which he has uſed to reprobate it are apli-

cable

cable with equal force againſt his own propoſal, as he has there explained it.

He allows that his plan can only provide for a certain number of families, and has nothing to do with the increaſe from them[a]; but in allowing this, he allows that it does not reach the grand difficulty attending a proviſion for the poor. In this moſt eſſential point, after reprobating me for ſaying that the poor have no claim of *right* to ſupport, he is compelled to adopt the very ſame concluſion, and to own that "it might be prudent to conſider the "miſery to which the progreſſive population might "be ſubject, when there was not a ſufficient de-"mand for them in towns and manufactures, as an "evil which it was abſolutely and phyſically im-"poſſible to prevent." Now the ſole reaſon why I ſay that the poor have no claim of *right* to ſupport is the phyſical impoſſibility of relieving this progreſſive population. Mr. Young expreſsly acknowledges this phyſical impoſſibility; yet with an inconſiſtency ſcarcely credible ſtill declaims againſt my declaration.

The power which the ſociety may poſſeſs of relieving a certain portion of the poor is a conſideration perfectly diſtinct from the general queſtion; and I am quite ſure I have never ſaid that it is not our duty to do all the good that is practicable. But this limited power of aſſiſting individuals can-

[a] Annals of Agriculture, No. 239, p. 219.

not poſſibly eſtabliſh a general right. If the poor have really a natural right to ſupport, and if our preſent laws be only a confirmation of this right, it ought certainly to extend unimpaired to all who are in diſtreſs, to the increaſe from the cottagers as well as to the cottagers themſelves; and it would be a palpable injuſtice in the ſociety to adopt Mr. Young's plan, and purchaſe from the preſent generation the diſfranchiſement of their poſterity.

Mr. Young objects very ſtrongly to that paſſage of the Eſſay[a], in which I obſerve, that a man who plunges himſelf into poverty and dependence by marrying without any proſpect of being able to maintain his family, has more reaſon to accuſe himſelf, than the price of labour, the pariſh, the avarice of the rich, the inſtitutions of ſociety, and the diſpenſations of Providence; except in as far as he has been deceived by thoſe who ought to have inſtructed him. In anſwer to this, Mr. Young ſays, that the poor fellow is juſtified in every one of theſe complaints, that of Providence alone excepted; and that ſeeing other cottagers living comfortably with three or four acres of land, he has cauſe to accuſe inſtitutions which deny him that which the rich could well ſpare, and which would give him all he wants[b]. I would beg Mr. Young for a moment to conſider how the matter would ſtand, if his own

[a] Book iv. c. iii. p. 506, 4to. edit. vol. ii. p. 339, 8vo.

[b] Annals of Agriculture, No. 239, p. 226.

plan

plan were completely executed. After all the commons had been divided as he has propoſed, if a labourer had more than one ſon, in what reſpect would this ſon be in a different ſituation from the man that I have ſuppoſed. Mr. Young cannot poſſibly mean to ſay, that if he had the very natural deſire of marrying at twenty, he would ſtill have a right to complain that the ſociety did not give him a houſe and three or four acres of land. He has indeed expreſsly denied this abſurd conſequence, though in ſo doing he has directly contradicted the declaration juſt quoted[a]. The progreſſive population, he ſays, would, according to his ſyſtem, be cut off from the influence of the poor laws, and the encouragement to marry would remain exactly in that proportion leſs than at preſent. Under theſe circumſtances, without land, without the proſpect of pariſh relief, and with the price of labour only ſufficient to maintain two children, can Mr. Young ſeriouſly think that the poor man, if he be really aware of his ſituation, does not do wrong in marrying, and ought not to accuſe himſelf for following what Mr. Young calls the dictates of God, of nature, and of revelation. Mr. Young cannot be unaware of the wretchedneſs that muſt inevitably follow a marriage under ſuch circumſtances. His plan makes no proviſion whatever for altering theſe circumſtances. He muſt therefore totally diſregard

[a] Annals of Agriculture, No. 239, p. 214.

all the misery arising from excessive poverty, or if he allows that these supernumerary members must necessarily wait, either till a cottage with land becomes vacant in the country, or that by emigrating to towns they can find the means of providing for a family, all the declamation which he has urged with such pomp against deferring marriage in my system, would be equally applicable in his own system. In fact, if Mr. Young's plan really attained the object which it professes to have in view, that of bettering the condition of the poor, and did not defeat its intent by encouraging a too rapid multiplication, and consequently lowering the price of labour, it cannot be doubted, that not only the supernumerary members just mentioned, but all the labouring poor must wait longer before they could marry, than they do at present.

The following proposition may be said to be capable of mathematical demonstration. In a country whose resources will not permanently admit of an increase of population more rapid than the existing rate, no improvement in the condition of the people which would tend to diminish mortality could *possibly* take place without being accompanied by a smaller proportion of births, supposing of course no particular increase of emigration[a]. To a person

[a] With regard to the resource of emigration, I refer the reader to the 4th chapter, Book iii. of the Essay. Nothing is more easy than

a perſon who has conſidered the ſubject, there is no propoſition in Euclid which brings home to the mind a ſtronger conviction than this, and there is no truth ſo invariably confirmed by all the regiſters of births, deaths, and marriages that have ever been collected. In this country it has appeared that, according to the returns of the population act, the proportion of births to deaths is about 4 to 3. This proportion with a mortality of 1 in 40[a], would double the population in 83 years and a half; and as we cannot ſuppoſe that the country could admit of more than a quadrupled population in the next hundred and ſixty-ſix years, we may ſafely ſay that its reſources will not allow of a permanent rate of increaſe greater than that which is taking place at preſent. But if this be granted, it follows as a direct concluſion, that if Mr. Young's plan, or any

than to ſay, that three fourths of the habitable globe are yet unpeopled, but it is by no means ſo eaſy to fill theſe parts with flouriſhing colonies. The peculiar circumſtances which have cauſed the ſpirit of emigration in the Highlands, ſo clearly explained in the able work of Lord Selkirk before referred to, are not of conſtant recurrence; nor is it by any means to be wiſhed that they ſhould be ſo. And yet without ſome ſuch circumſtances, people are by no means very ready to leave their native ſoil, and will bear much diſtreſs at home, rather than venture on theſe diſtant regions. I am of opinion that it is both the duty and intereſt of governments to facilitate emigration, but it would ſurely be unjuſt to oblige people to leave their country and kindred againſt their inclinations.

[a] Table iii. p. 238, 4to. edit. and Table ii. p. 30, vol. ii. 8vo. edit.

other, really ſucceeded in bettering the condition of the poor, and enabling them to rear more of their children, the vacancies in cottages in proportion to the number of expectants would happen ſlower than at preſent, and the age of marriage muſt inevitably be later. Thoſe, therefore, who propoſe plans for bettering the condition of the poor, and yet at the ſame time reprobate later or fewer marriages, are guilty of the moſt puerile inconſiſtency; and I cannot but be perfectly aſtoniſhed that Mr. Young, who once underſtood the ſubject, ſhould have indulged himſelf in ſuch a poor declamation about paſſions, profligacy, burning, and ravens. It is in fact a ſilly, not to ſay impious, declamation againſt the laws of nature and the diſpenſations of Providence.

With regard to the expreſſion of later marriages, it ſhould always be recollected that it refers to no particular age, but is entirely comparative. The marriages in England are later than in France, the natural conſequence of that prudence and reſpectability generated by a better government; and can we doubt that good has been the reſult? The marriages in this country now are later than they were before the revolution, and I feel firmly perſuaded that the increaſed healthineſs obſerved of late years could not poſſibly have taken place without this accompanying circumſtance. Two or three years in the average age of marriage, by lengthening each generation,

generation, and tending, in a ſmall degree, both to diminiſh the prolificknefs of marriages, and the number of born living to be married, may make a conſiderable difference in the rate of increaſe, and be adequate to allow for a conſiderably diminiſhed mortality. But I would on no account talk of any limits whatever. The only plain and intelligible meaſure with regard to marriage is the having a fair proſpect of being able to maintain a family. If the poſſeſſion of one of Mr. Young's cottages would give the labourer this proſpect, he would be quite right to marry; but if it did not, or if he could only obtain a rented houſe without land, and the wages of labour were only ſufficient to maintain two children, does Mr. Young, who cuts him off from the influence of the poor laws, preſume to ſay that he would ſtill be right in marrying[a]?

Mr. Young has aſſerted that I have made perfect chaſtity in the ſingle ſtate abſolutely neceſſary to the ſucceſs of my plan; but this ſurely is a miſrepreſentation. Perfect virtue is indeed abſolutely neceſſary to enable man to avoid *all* the moral and phyſical evils which depend upon his own conduct; but who ever expected perfect virtue upon earth? I have ſaid what I conceive to be ſtrictly

[a] The loweſt proſpect with which a man can be juſtified in marrying ſeems to be, the power, when in health, of earning ſuch wages, as at the average price of corn will maintain the average number of living children to a marriage.

true,

true, that it is our duty to defer marriage till we can feed our children, and that it is alſo our duty not to indulge ourſelves in vicious gratifications; but I have never ſaid that I expected either, much leſs both of theſe duties to be completely fulfilled. In this, and a number of other caſes, it may happen, that the violation of one of two duties will enable a man to perform the other with greater facility; but if they be really both duties, and both practicable, no power *on earth* can abſolve a man from the guilt of violating either. This can only de done by that God who can weigh the crime againſt the temptation, and will temper juſtice with mercy. The moraliſt is ſtill bound to inculcate the practice of both duties, and each individual muſt be left to act under the temptations to which he is expoſed as his conſcience ſhall dictate. Whatever I may have ſaid in drawing a picture *profeſſedly* viſionary, for the ſake of illuſtration, in the practical application of my principles I have taken man as he is, with all his imperfections on his head. And thus viewing him, and knowing that ſome checks to population muſt exiſt, I have not the ſlighteſt heſitation in ſaying, that the prudential check to marriage is better than premature mortality. And in this deciſion I feel myſelf completely juſtified by experience.

In every inſtance that can be traced in which an improved government has given to its ſubjects a greater

greater degree of foreſight, induſtry, and perſonal dignity, theſe effects, under ſimilar circumſtances of increaſe, have invariably been accompanied by a diminiſhed proportion of marriages. This is a proof that an increaſe of moral worth in the general character is not at leaſt *incompatible* with an increaſe of temptations with reſpect to one particular vice; and the inſtances of Norway, Switzerland, England, and Scotland, adduced in the laſt chapter of this Eſſay, ſhow, that in comparing different countries together, a ſmaller proportion of marriages and births does not neceſſarily imply the greater prevalence even of this particular vice. This is ſurely quite enough for the legiſlator. He cannot eſtimate with tolerable accuracy the degree in which chaſtity in the ſingle ſtate prevails. His general concluſions muſt be founded on general reſults, and theſe are clearly in his favour.

To much of Mr. Young's plan, as he has at preſent explained it, I ſhould by no means object. The peculiar evil which I apprehended from it, that of taking the poor from the conſumption of wheat, and feeding them on milk and potatoes might certainly be avoided by a limitation of the number of cottages; and I entirely agree with him in thinking, that we ſhould not be deterred from making 500,000 families more comfortable, becauſe we cannot extend the ſame relief to all the reſt. I have indeed myſelf ventured to recommend a general improvement of

of cottages, and even the cow ſyſtem on a limited ſcale; and perhaps with proper precautions a certain portion of land might be given to a conſiderable body of the labouring claſſes.

If the law which entitles the poor to ſupport were to be repealed, any plan, which would tend to render ſuch repeal more palatable on its firſt promulgation, I ſhould moſt highly approve; and in this view, ſome kind of compact with the poor might be very deſirable. A plan of letting land to labourers under certain conditions has lately been tried in the pariſh of Long Newnton in Glouceſterſhire, and the reſult with a general propoſal founded on it, has been ſubmitted to the public by Mr. Eſtcourt. The preſent ſucceſs has been very ſtriking; but in this, and every other caſe of the kind, we ſhould always bear in mind that no experiment reſpecting a proviſion for the poor can be ſaid to be complete till ſucceeding generations have ariſen[a]. I doubt if there ever has been an inſtance of any thing like a liberal inſtitution for

[a] In any plan, particularly, of a diſtribution of land, as a compenſation for the relief given by the poor laws, the ſucceeding generations would form the grand difficulty. All others would be perfectly trivial in compariſon. For a time every thing might go on very ſmoothly, and the rates be much diminiſhed; but afterwards, they would either increaſe again as rapidly as before, or the ſcheme would be expoſed to all the ſame objections which have been made to mine, without the ſame juſtice and conſiſtency to palliate them.

the

the poor which did not ſucceed on its firſt eſtabliſhment, however it might have failed afterwards. But this conſideration ſhould by no means deter us from making ſuch experiments, when preſent good is to be obtained by them, and a future overbalance of evil not juſtly to be apprehended. It ſhould only make us leſs raſh in drawing our inferences.

With regard to the general queſtion of the advantages to the lower claſſes of poſſeſſing land, it ſhould be recollected that ſuch poſſeſſions are by no means a novelty. Formerly this ſyſtem prevailed in almoſt every country with which we are acquainted, and prevails at preſent in many countries where the peaſants are far from being remarkable for their comforts, but are, on the contrary, very poor, and particularly ſubject to ſcarcities. With reſpect to this latter evil, indeed, it is quite obvious, that a peaſantry which depends principally on its poſſeſſions in land, muſt be more expoſed to it, than one which depends on the general wages of labour. When a year of deficient crops occurs in a country of any extent and diverſity of ſoil, it is always partial, and ſome diſtricts are more affected than others. But when a bad crop of graſs, corn, or potatoes, or a mortality among cattle, falls on a poor man whoſe principal dependance is on two or three acres of land, he is in the moſt deplorable and helpleſs ſituation. He is comparatively without money to purchaſe ſup-

plies, and is not for a moment to be compared with the man who depends on the wages of labour, and who will of courſe be able to purchaſe that portion of the general crop, whatever it may be, to which his relative ſituation in the ſociety entitles him. In Sweden where the farmers labourers are paid principally in land, and often keep two or three cows, it is not uncommon for the peaſants of one diſtrict to be almoſt ſtarving, while their neighbours at a little diſtance are living in comparative plenty. It will be found indeed generally, that, in almoſt all the countries which are particularly ſubject to ſcarcities and famines, either the farms are very ſmall, or the labourers are paid principally in land. China, Indoſtan, and the former ſtate of the Highlands of Scotland furniſh ſome proofs among many others of the truth of this obſervation; and in reference to the ſmall properties of France, Mr. Young himſelf in his tour particularly notices the diſtreſs ariſing from the leaſt failure of the crops; and obſerves that ſuch a deficiency as in England paſſes almoſt without notice, in France is attended with dreadful calamities[a].

Should any plan therefore of aſſiſting the poor by land be adopted in this country, it would be abſolutely eſſential to its ultimate ſucceſs to prevent

[a] Travels in France, vol. i. c. xii. p. 409. That country will probably be the leaſt liable to ſcarcities, in which agriculture is carried on as the moſt flouriſhing *manufacture* of the ſtate.

them

them from making it their principal dependance. And this might probably be done by attending ſtrictly to the two following rules. Not to let the diviſions of land be ſo great as to interrupt the cottager eſſentially in his uſual labours; and always to ſtop in the further diſtribution of land and cottages, when the price of labour, independent of any aſſiſtance from land, would not at the average price of corn maintain three, or at leaſt two children. Could the matter be ſo ordered, that the labourer in working for others ſhould ſtill continue to earn the ſame real command over the neceſſaries of life that he did before, a very great acceſſion of comfort and happineſs might accrue to the poor from the poſſeſſion of land, without any evil that I can foreſee at preſent. But if theſe points were not attended to, I ſhould certainly fear an approximation to the ſtate of the poor in France, Sweden, and Ireland, nor do I think that any of the partial experiments that have yet taken place afford the ſlighteſt preſumption to the contrary. The reſult of theſe experiments is indeed exactly ſuch as one ſhould have expected. Who could ever have doubted that if without lowering the price of labour, or taking the labourer off from his uſual occupations, you could give him the produce of one or two acres of land and the benefit of a cow, you would decidedly raiſe his condition? But it by no means follows that he would retain this advantage if the ſyſtem were ſo extended

extended as to make the land his principal dependance, to lower the price of labour, and in the language of Mr. Young, to take the poor from the conſumption of wheat, and feed them on milk and potatoes. It does not appear to me ſo marvellous as it does to Mr. Young, that the very ſame ſyſtem which in Lincolnſhire and Rutlandſhire may produce now the moſt comfortable peaſantry in the Britiſh dominions, ſhould in the end, if extended without proper precautions, aſſimilate the condition of the labourers of this country to that of the lower claſſes of the Iriſh.

It is generally dangerous and impolitic in a government to take upon itſelf to regulate the ſupply of any commodity in requeſt, and probably the ſupply of labourers form no exception to the general rule. I would on no account therefore propoſe a poſitive law to regulate their increaſe, but as any aſſiſtance which the ſociety might give them cannot, in the nature of things, be unlimited, the line may fairly be drawn where we pleaſe; and with regard to the increaſe from this point, every thing would be left as before to individual exertion and individual ſpeculation.

If any plan of this kind were adopted by the government, I cannot help thinking that it might be made the means of giving the beſt kind of encouragement and reward, to thoſe who are employed in our defence. If the period of enliſting were

were only for a limited time, and at the expiration of that time, every person who had conducted himſelf well was entitled to a houſe and a ſmall portion of land, if a country labourer, and to a tenement in a town and a ſmall penſion, if an artificer, all inalienable, a very ſtrong motive would be held out to young men, not only to enter into the ſervice of their country, but to behave well in that ſervice; and in a ſhort time there would be ſuch a martial population at home, as the unfortunate ſtate of Europe ſeems in a moſt peculiar manner to require. As it is only limited aſſiſtance that the ſociety can poſſibly give, it ſeems in every reſpect fair and proper, that in regulating this limit ſome important end ſhould be attained.

If the poor laws be allowed to remain exactly in their preſent ſtate, we ought at leaſt to be aware, to what cauſe it is owing that their effects have not been more pernicious than they are obſerved to be, that we may not complain of, or alter thoſe parts, without which we ſhould really not have the power of continuing them. The law which obliges each pariſh to maintain its own poor is open to many objections. It keeps the overſeers and church-wardens continually on the watch to prevent new comers, and conſtantly in a ſtate of diſpute with other pariſhes. It thus prevents the free circulation of labour from place to place, and renders its price very unequal in different parts of the kingdom. It

diſpoſes all landlords rather to pull down than to build cottages on their eſtates; and this ſcarcity of habitations in the country, by driving more to the towns than would otherwiſe have gone, gives a relative diſcouragement to agriculture and a relative encouragement to manufactures. Theſe, it muſt be allowed, are no inconſiderable evils; but if the cauſe which occaſions them were removed, evils of much greater magnitude would follow. I agree with Mr. Young in thinking that there is ſcarcely a pariſh in the kingdom, where, if more cottages were built, and let at any tolerably moderate rents, they would not be immediately filled with new couples. I even agree with him in thinking that in ſome places this want of habitations operates too ſtrongly in preventing marriage. But I have not the leaſt doubt that, conſidered generally, its operation in the preſent ſtate of things is moſt beneficial; and that it is almoſt excluſively owing to this cauſe, that we have been able ſo long to continue the poor laws. If any man could build a hovel by the road ſide, or on the neighbouring waſte, without moleſtation, and yet were ſecure that he and his family would always be ſupplied with work and food by the pariſh, if they were not readily to be obtained elſewhere, I do not believe that it would be long before the phyſical impoſſibility of executing the letter of the poor laws would appear. It is of importance therefore to be aware, that it is not

becauſe this or any other ſociety has really the power of employing and ſupporting all that might be born, that we have been able to continue the preſent ſyſtem; but becauſe by the indirect operation of this ſyſtem, not adverted to at the time of its eſtabliſhment, and frequently reprobated ſince, the number of births is always very greatly limited, and thus reduced within the pale of poſſible ſupport.

The obvious tendency of the poor laws is certainly to encourage marriage, but a cloſer attention to all their indirect as well as direct effects, may make it a matter of doubt how far they really do this. They clearly tend, in their general operation, to diſcourage ſobriety and economy, to encourage idleneſs and the deſertion of children, and to put virtue and vice more on a level than they otherwiſe would be; but I will not preſume to ſay poſitively that they tend to encourage population. It is certain that the proportion of births in this country compared with others in ſimilar circumſtances is very ſmall; but this was to be expected from the ſuperiority of the government, the more reſpectable ſtate of the people, and the more general ſpread of a taſte for cleanlineſs and conveniences. And it will readily occur to the reader, that owing to theſe cauſes, combined with the twofold operation of the poor laws, it muſt be extremely difficult to aſcertain, with any degree of preciſion, what has been their effect on population.

The only argument of a general nature againſt the Eſſay which ſtrikes me as having any conſiderable force is the following. It is againſt the application of its principles, not the principles themſelves, and has not, that I know of, been yet advanced in its preſent form. It may be ſaid that according to my own reaſonings and the facts ſtated in my work, it appears that the diminiſhed proportion of births, which I conſider as abſolutely neceſſary to the permanent improvement of the condition of the poor, invariably follows an improved government, and the greater degree of perſonal reſpectability which it gives to the lower claſſes of ſociety. Conſequently allowing the deſirableneſs of the end, it is not neceſſary, in order to obtain it, to riſk the promulgation of any new opinions, which may alarm the prejudices of the poor, and the effect of which we cannot with certainty foreſee; but we have only to proceed in improving our civil polity, conferring the benefits of education upon all, and removing every obſtacle to the general extenſion of all thoſe privileges and advantages which may be enjoyed in common, and we may be quite ſure that the effect which I look forward to, and which can alone render theſe advantages permanent, will follow.

I acknowledge the truth and force of this argument, and have only to obſerve in anſwer to it, that it is difficult to conceive that we ſhould not proceed

ceed with more celerity and certainty towards the end in view, if the principal cauſes which tend to promote or retard it were generally known. In particular, I cannot help looking forward to a very decided improvement in the habits and temper of the lower claſſes, when their real ſituation has been clearly explained to them; and if this were done gradually and cautiouſly, and accompanied with proper moral and religious inſtructions, I ſhould not expect any danger from it. I am always unwilling to believe that the general diſſemination of truth is prejudicial. Caſes of the kind are undoubtedly conceivable, but they ſhould be admitted with very great caution. If the general preſumption in favour of the advantage of truth were once eſſentially ſhaken, all ardour in its cauſe would ſhare the ſame fate, and the intereſts of knowledge and virtue moſt decidedly ſuffer. It is beſides a ſpecies of arrogance not lightly to be encouraged, for any man to ſuppoſe that he has penetrated further into the laws of nature than the great Author of them intended, further than is conſiſtent with the good of mankind.

Under theſe impreſſions I have freely given my opinions to the public. In the truth of the general principles of the Eſſay, I confeſs that I feel ſuch a confidence that, till ſomething has been advanced againſt them very different indeed from any thing that has hitherto appeared, I cannot help conſider-

ing them as incontrovertible. With regard to the application of theſe principles the caſe is certainly different; and as dangers of oppoſite kinds are to be guarded againſt, the ſubject will of courſe admit of much latitude of opinion. At all events, however, it muſt be allowed, that whatever may be our determination reſpecting the advantages or diſadvantages of endeavouring to circulate the truths on this ſubject among the poor, it muſt be highly advantageous that they ſhould be known to all thoſe who have it in their power to influence the laws and inſtitutions of ſociety. That the body of an army ſhould not in all caſes know the particulars of their ſituation may poſſibly be deſirable; but that the leaders ſhould be in the ſame ſtate of ignorance will hardly, I think, be contended.

If it be really true, that without a diminiſhed proportion of births[a] we cannot attain any *permanent* improvement in the health and happineſs of the maſs of the people, and ſecure that deſcription of population, which, by containing a larger ſhare of adults, is beſt calculated to create freſh reſources, and conſequently to encourage a continued increaſe of efficient population, it is ſurely of the higheſt importance that this ſhould be known, that if we take no ſteps directly to promote this effect, we ſhould

[a] It ſhould always be recollected that a diminiſhed *proportion* of births may take place under a conſtant annual increaſe of the abſolute number. This is, in fact, exactly what has happened in England and Scotland during the laſt forty years,

not

not at leaſt, under the influence of the former prejudices on this ſubject, endeavour to counteract it*. And

* We ſhould be aware, that a ſcarcity of men owing either to great loſſes, or to ſome particular and unuſual demand, is liable to happen in every country; and in no reſpect invalidates the general principle that has been advanced. Whatever may be the tendency to increaſe, it is quite clear that an extraordinary ſupply of men cannot be produced either in ſix months, or ſix years; but even with a view to a more than uſual ſupply, cauſes which tend to diminiſh mortality are not only more certain but more rapid in their effects, than direct encouragements to marriage. An increaſe of births may, and often does, take place, without the ultimate accompliſhment of our object; but, ſuppoſing the births to remain the ſame, it is impoſſible for a diminiſhed mortality not to be accompanied by an increaſe of effective population.

We are very apt to be deceived on this ſubject by the almoſt conſtant demand for labour which prevails in every proſperous country; but we ſhould conſider that in countries which can but juſt keep up their population, as the price of labour muſt be ſufficient to rear a family of a certain number, a ſingle man would have a ſuperfluity, and labour would be in conſtant demand at the price of the ſubſiſtence of an individual. It cannot be doubted that in this country we could ſoon employ double the number of labourers if we could have them at our own price; becauſe ſupply will produce demand as well as demand ſupply. The preſent great extenſion of the cotton trade did not originate in an extraordinary increaſe of demand, at the former prices, but in an increaſed ſupply at a much cheaper rate, which of courſe immediately produced an extended demand. As we cannot however obtain men at ſixpence a day by improvements in machinery, we muſt ſubmit to the neceſſary conditions of their rearing; and there is no man who has the ſlighteſt feeling for the happineſs of

And if it be thought unadviſeable to aboliſh the poor laws, it cannot be doubted that a knowledge of thoſe general principles, which render them inefficient in their humane intentions, might be applied ſo far to modify them and regulate their execution, as to remove many of the evils with which they are accompanied, and make them leſs objectionable.

There is only one ſubject more which I ſhall notice, and that is rather a matter of feeling than of argument. Many perſons, whoſe underſtandings are not of that deſcription that they can regulate their belief or diſbelief by their likes or diſlikes, have profeſſed their perfect conviction of the truth of the general principles contained in the Eſſay; but at the ſame time have lamented this conviction, as throwing a darker ſhade over our views of human nature, and tending particularly to narrow our proſpects of future improvement. In theſe feelings I cannot agree with them. If, from a review of the paſt, I could not only believe that a fundamental and very extraordinary improvement in human ſociety was poſſible, but feel a firm confidence that it would take place, I ſhould undoubtedly be grieved to find that I had overlooked ſome cauſe,

the moſt numerous claſs of ſociety, or has even juſt views of policy on the ſubject, who would not rather chooſe that the requiſite population ſhould be obtained by ſuch a price of labour, combined with ſuch habits, as would occaſion a very ſmall mortality, than from a great proportion of births, of which comparatively few would reach manhood.

the

the operation of which would at once blaſt my hopes. But if the contemplation of the paſt hiſtory of mankind, from which alone we can judge of the future, renders it almoſt impoſſible to feel ſuch a confidence, I confeſs that I had much rather believe that ſome real and deeply-ſeated difficulty exiſted, the conſtant ſtruggle with which was calculated to rouſe the natural inactivity of man, to call forth his faculties, and invigorate and improve his mind; a ſpecies of difficulty which it muſt be allowed is moſt eminently and peculiarly ſuited to a ſtate of probation, than that nearly all the evils of life might with the moſt perfect facility be removed, but for the perverſeneſs and wickedneſs of thoſe who influence human inſtitutions[a].

A perſon who held this latter opinion muſt neceſſarily live in a conſtant ſtate of irritation and diſappointment. The ardent expectations with which he might begin life would ſoon receive the moſt cruel check. The regular progreſs of ſociety, under the moſt favourable circumſtances, would to

[a] The miſery and vice ariſing from the preſſure of the population too hard againſt the limits of ſubſiſtence, and the miſery and vice ariſing from promiſcuous intercourſe, may be conſidered as the Scylla and Charybdis of human life. That it is poſſible for each individual to ſteer clear of both theſe rocks is certainly true, and a truth which I have endeavoured ſtrongly to maintain; but that theſe rocks do not form a difficulty independent of human inſtitutions, no perſon with any knowledge of the ſubject can venture to aſſert.

him

him appear ſlow and unſatisfactory; but inſtead even of this regular progreſs, his eye would be more frequently preſented with retrograde movements, and the moſt diſheartening reverſes. The changes to which he had looked forward with delight, would be found big with new and unlooked-for evils, and the characters on which he had repoſed the moſt confidence, would be ſeen frequently deſerting his favourite cauſe, either from the leſſons of experience or the temptation of power. In this ſtate of conſtant diſappointment, he would be but too apt to attribute every thing to the worſt motives; he would be inclined to give up the cauſe of improvement in deſpair; and judging of the whole from a part, nothing but a peculiar goodneſs of heart and amiableneſs of diſpoſition could preſerve him from that ſickly and diſguſting miſanthropy which is but too frequently the end of ſuch characters.

On the contrary, a perſon who held the other opinion, as he would ſet out with more moderate expectations, would of courſe be leſs liable to diſappointment. A compariſon of the beſt with the worſt ſtates of ſociety, and the obvious inference from analogy that the beſt were capable of further improvement, would conſtantly preſent to his mind a proſpect ſufficiently animating to warrant his moſt perſevering exertions. But aware of the difficulties with which the ſubject was ſurrounded, knowing how often in the attempt to attain one object ſome other

ther had been loſt, and that though ſociety had made rapid advances in ſome directions, it had been comparatively ſtationary in others, he would be conſtantly prepared for failures. Theſe failures, inſtead of creating deſpair, would only create knowledge; inſtead of checking his ardour, would only give it a wiſer and more ſucceſsful direction; and having founded his opinion of mankind on broad and general grounds, the diſappointment of any particular views would not change this opinion; but even in declining age he would probably be found believing as firmly in the reality and general prevalence of virtue, as in the exiſtence and frequency of vice; and to the laſt, looking forward with a juſt confidence to thoſe improvements in ſociety, which the hiſtory of the past, in ſpite of all the reverſes with which it is accompanied, ſeems clearly to warrant.

It may be true that if ignorance is bliſs, 'tis folly to be wiſe; but if ignorance be not bliſs as in the preſent inſtance; if all falſe views of ſociety muſt not only impede decidedly the progreſs of improvement, but neceſſarily terminate in the moſt bitter diſappointments to the individuals who form them; I ſhall always think that the feelings and proſpects of thoſe who make the juſteſt eſtimates of our future expectations, are the moſt conſolatory; and that the characters of this deſcription are happier themſelves, at the ſame time that they are beyond compariſon

pariſon more likely to contribute to the improvement and happineſs of ſociety[a].

[a] While the laſt ſheet of this Appendix was printing, I heard with ſome ſurpriſe, that an argument had been drawn from the Principle of Population in favour of the ſlave trade. As the juſt concluſion from that principle appears to me to be exactly the contrary, I cannot help ſaying a few words on the ſubject.

If the only argument againſt the ſlave trade had been, that from the mortality it occaſioned, it was likely to unpeople Africa, or extinguiſh the human race, ſome comfort with regard to theſe fears might, indeed, be drawn from the Principle of Population; but as the neceſſity of the abolition has never, that I know of, been urged on the ground of theſe apprehenſions, a reference to the laws which regulate the increaſe of the human ſpecies was certainly moſt unwiſe in the friends of the ſlave trade.

The abolition of the ſlave trade is defended principally by the two following arguments:

1ſt. That the trade to the coaſt of Africa for ſlaves, together with their ſubſequent treatment in the Weſt Indies, is productive of ſo much human miſery, that its continuance is diſgraceful to us as men and as Chriſtians.

2d. That the culture of the West-India iſlands could go on with equal advantage, and much greater ſecurity, if no farther importation of ſlaves were to take place.

With regard to the firſt argument, it appears, in the Eſſay on the Principle of Population, that ſo great is the tendency of mankind to increaſe, that nothing but ſome phyſical or moral check operating in an *exceſſive* and *unuſual* degree, can permanently keep the population of a country below the average means of ſubſiſtence. In the Weſt India iſlands a conſtant recruit of labouring negroes is neceſſary; and conſequently the immediate checks to population muſt operate with *exceſſive* and *unuſual* force. All the checks to population were found reſolvable into moral

moral reſtraint, vice, and miſery. In a ſtate of ſlavery moral reſtraint cannot have much influence; nor in any ſtate will it ever continue permanently to diminiſh the population. The whole effect, therefore, is to be attributed to the *exceſſive* and *unuſual* action of vice and miſery; and a reference to the facts contained in the Eſſay, incontrovertibly proves that the condition of the ſlaves in the Weſt Indies, taken altogether, is moſt wretched, and that the repreſentations of the friends of the abolition cannot eaſily be exaggerated.

It will be ſaid, that the principal reaſon why the ſlaves in the Weſt Indies conſtantly diminiſh, is, that the ſexes are not in equal numbers, a conſiderable majority of males being always imported; but this very circumſtance decides at once on the cruelty of their ſituation, and muſt neceſſarily be one powerful cauſe of their degraded moral condition.

It may be ſaid alſo, that many towns do not keep up their numbers, and yet the ſame objection is not made to them on that account. But the caſes will admit of no compariſon. If for the ſake of better ſociety or higher wages, people are willing to expoſe themſelves to a leſs pure air, and greater temptations to vice, no hardſhip is ſuffered that can reaſonably be complained of. The ſuperior mortality of towns falls principally upon children, and is ſcarcely noticed by people of mature age. The ſexes are in equal numbers, and every man after a few years of induſtry may look forward to the happineſs of domeſtic life. If during the time that he is thus waiting, he acquires various habits which indiſpoſe him to marriage, he has nobody to blame except himſelf. But with the negroes the caſe is totally different. The unequal number of the ſexes ſhuts out at once the majority of them from all chance of domeſtic happineſs. They have no hope of this kind to ſweeten their toils, and animate their exertions; but are neceſſarily condemned either to unceaſing privation, or to the moſt vicious exceſſes; and thus ſhut out from every cheering proſpect, we cannot be ſurpriſed that they are in general ready to welcome that death which ſo many meet with in the prime of life.

The

The ſecond argument is no leſs powerfully ſupported by the Principle of Population than the firſt. It appears, from a very general ſurvey of different countries, that under every form of government, however unjuſt and tyrannical, in every climate of the known world, however apparently unfavourable to health, it has been found that population, with the ſole exception above alluded to, has been able to keep itſelf up to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence. Conſequently, if by the abolition of the trade to Africa, the ſlaves in the Weſt Indies were placed only in a *tolerable* ſituation, if their civil condition and moral habits were only made to *approach* to thoſe which prevail among the maſs of the human race in the worſt-governed countries of the world, it is contrary to the general laws of nature to ſuppoſe, that they would not be able by procreation fully to ſupply the effective demand for labour; and it is difficult to conceive that a population ſo raiſed would not be in every point of view preferable to that which exiſts at preſent.

It is perfectly clear, therefore, that a conſideration of the laws which govern the increaſe and decreaſe of the human ſpecies, tends to ſtrengthen, in the moſt powerful manner, all the arguments in favour of the abolition.

With regard to the ſtate of ſociety among the African nations, it will readily occur to the reader, that in deſcribing it, the queſtion of the ſlave trade was foreign to my purpoſe; and I might naturally fear that if I entered upon it I ſhould be led into too long a digreſſion. But certainly all the facts which I have mentioned, and which are taken principally from Park, if they do not abſolutely *prove* that the wars in Africa are excited and aggravated by the traffic on the coaſt, tend powerfully to confirm the *ſuppoſition*. The ſtate of Africa, as I have deſcribed it, is exactly ſuch as we ſhould expect in a country, where the capture of men was conſidered as a more advantageous employment than agriculture or manufactures. Of the ſtate of theſe nations ſome hundred years ago it muſt be confeſſed that we have little knowledge that we can depend upon: but allowing that the regular plundering excurſions, which Park deſcribes, are of the moſt antient date;

date; yet it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe that any circumſtance which, like the European traffic, muſt give additional value to the plunder thus acquired, would not powerfully aggravate them, and effectually prevent all progreſs towards a happier order of things. As long as the nations of Europe continue barbarous enough to purchaſe ſlaves in Africa, we may be quite ſure that Africa will continue barbarous enough to ſupply them.

THE END.

T. Bensley, Printer,
Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London.

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED

LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below,
or on the date to which renewed. Renewals only:
Tel. No. 642-3405
Renewals may be made 4 days prior to date due.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

JUL 7 1971 32

REC'D LD JUN 23 71 -10AM 77

DEC 4 1973 47

REC'D LD DEC 4 '73 -3 PM

NOV 3 1977 42

REC. CIR. MAR 7 1979

LD21A-50m-2,'71
(P2001s10)476—A-32

General Library
University of California
Berkeley